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Charlotte Brooke,

June 18<sup>th</sup> 1804



THE  
STRANGERS.



THE

# STRANGERS;

*Agnes Jane Kirkcaldie*  
A NOVEL.

*Prose Plain*

*Annals 10*  
IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY MRS. NORRIS,

AUTHOR OF SECOND LOVE, &c.

VOL. I.

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1806.

ST. PAUL

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1871

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THE ST. PAUL

AND THE ST. PAUL

AND THE ST. PAUL

1871

TO THE

# R E A D E R.



It has been most unfortunate for the following volumes that their appearance was retarded till they lost the protection under which they were permitted to claim the public favour. HER GRACE the late DUCHESS of DEVONSHIRE had accepted their dedication; and while the Genius of literature droops for that light by which she has so long been invigorated, the author of this work has deeply to lament the individual loss she has sus-

tained. Separated from her native country, and consequently from friends and connections, she only dared to plead for notice through an interest so absolute and a name so powerful; but deprived of this shield from censure and obscurity, she must entreat for indulgence where she wants talent to please.

That this indulgence has on a former occasion been accorded, she must with gratitude acknowledge; but the errors which in a first production might hope for pardon, must, in a second, be wholly condemned. Amongst the readers who condescend to peruse Novels, many will be heard to pronounce against this story as romantic, and the characters as unnatural.—To the first charge no refutation can be opposed as it is solely the



child of imagination ; but the last will be unfounded :—the CHARACTERS are but drawings from living originals, and the VIRTUES which may appear over-coloured, are (the author boasts to say,) no exaggeration of those *practised* by the revered and beloved friends who now daily surround the fireside of her respectable Father and Mother.

To the DUCHESS of DEVONSHIRE this assertion had been unnecessary: the EXISTANCE of magnanimity could have excited neither her doubt or her surprise ; and can it be deemed a selfish sorrow to deplore having lost at once a PROOF of that existence, and a certain passport to general success, and general approbation?—Alas! the loss and the disappointment will long be universally and severely felt ;

for what author, having obtained such a patronage, could submit to the mortification of wishing for, or soliciting any less **DISTINGUISHED** or less **IMPORTANT** !

*London, April 1806.*

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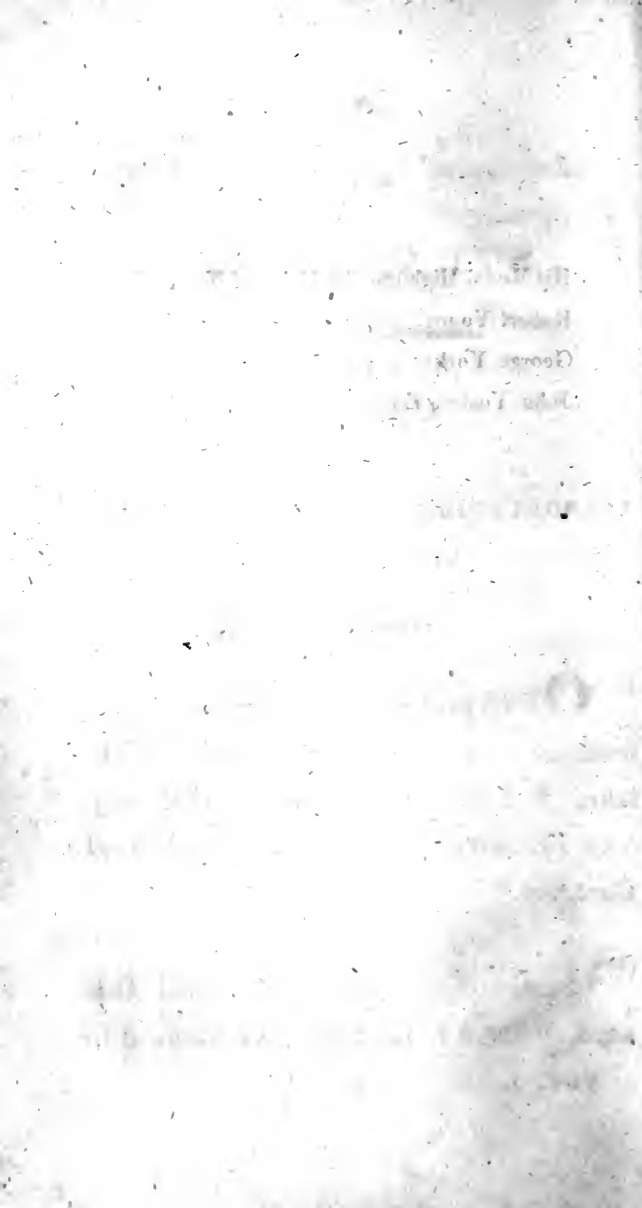
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THE  
STRANGERS.



CHAP. I.

INTRODUCTION TO SOME PRINCIPAL  
CHARACTERS.



“OF all professions in the list of professions,” said the reverend Doctor Estlake, “I certainly wonder, that any man of humanity, as you are, preferred the army.”

“Surely, Sir,” returned Colonel Belnard, “there is nothing more inimical to

humanity in that, than in many other situations of life. A Physician, for instance?"

"Your instance does not support your argument; a Physician often risques his life to preserve the lives of others; a soldier hazards his with a contrary intention."

"He is too frequently compelled to do so," answered the Colonel; "but you must admit that when duty calls him into danger, he merits approbation rather than censure for braving it?"

"Yes, in a right cause; but you will find it very difficult to persuade me that the wound from which you are just recovered, was not given in a wrong one."

“At least it was with a right intention.”

“Believe me, Charles,” said Doctor Estlake, “you are one of the few young men for whom I feel not only affection, but respect; yet I cannot help shaking my head when I remember, that you have suffered so much on account of a woman for whom you assert you never felt a passion.”

“And I asserted truly,” he replied: “is it not possible to admire and esteem a woman without also being in love?”

“At my time of life I answer, yes; at your age I would have answered, no.”

“And at any age I flatter myself your

conduct would have been similar to mine: my friend Waltheim injured his fortune by the most extravagant follies, and fancying himself desperately in love with Miss Arnault, endeavoured to win her affections without reflecting on the consequence."

"I should wonder indeed if he did reflect."

"But in an affair of this nature," resumed the Colonel, "there is no excuse for an unthinking head without incurring the censure of a faulty heart. Had he succeeded with Miss Arnault, her father never would have pardoned such a disappointment to his pride and avarice. I told Waltheim so, and he resented my interference; but as I had been his in-

troduction to the lady I could not avoid informing her of his real situation. She saw her danger, and frankly acknowledged obligation for the prevention: Waltheim was foiled in his pursuit, and I declared myself the author of his disappointment. The event that followed was but in course; we met, and—you know the rest.”

“ I know you suffered severely: but how does it happen that the man who thus deliberately played the part of a scoundrel, still retains your friendship?”

“ Because with all his follies he is not vicious; his temper is volatile, his passions warm, and his mind weak: but I have a stronger motive of attachment

than mere personal regard. I know him from a boy, and truly respected his late father, who formed such an advantageous opinion of my character, that on his death-bed he wrote to recommend his son to my guidance and friendship. To this letter I returned a solemn promise of compliance, and will fulfil it whatever may be the event."

"In you this conduct does not surprise me," said the Doctor: "in me his proceedings have excited only disgust."

"That is hardly fair my dear Sir," cried Belnard, "when he himself acknowledged his error: besides, I am persuaded he believed himself irretrievably smitten, and could have made her the happiest



woman existing. He is ever in extremes."

"Yes, truly," returned the Doctor; "I thought so the day you were wounded; I really feared he would have shot himself in horror for the mischief he had occasioned, but the moment your safety was declared he flew off; and though it is four months ago, he has written to enquire for you only once, and his letter of a few unintelligible lines is without date of time or place."

Colonel Belnard was much hurt at the persevering thoughtlessness of his young friend, but endeavoured to laugh at it, and was expressing his anxiety to know where he was rambling, when Mattocks, the Doctor's old servant, entered the room,

with a message from Mrs. Higgins, entreating he would make haste to read prayers for a sick lady, one of her lodgers. He brought in his master's hat and stick, and Colonel Belnard taking up his own accompanied his friend on the walk.

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## CHAP. II.

## A SUBJECT FOR PHILANTHROPY.



THE Vicarage-house of Doctor Estlake was situated near the town of Southampton, and the lodging-house of Mrs. Higgins at a little distance, and close by the beach. The reverend and humane clergyman, though not now a resident of the parish, was much beloved by his former neighbours, and often applied to on emergent occasions when he paid his annual visits. He knew Mrs. Higgins, and as he knocked gently at her door, desired his young friend to wait in her

parlour till his return from the sick lady.

“ Ah, Sir !” said Mrs. Higgins, who opened the door; “ you are too late: she is dead !”

“ Dead!—why did you not send for me sooner ?”

“ I don’t know, Sir :—this Mr. Technical has quite bewildered me.—I wish your reverence would speak to him.”

Curiosity in this instant became half as strong as humanity; the gentlemen willingly followed to the parlour, and the clattering of heels on the stairs announced the descent of Mr. Technical, who stumped after them, stroking the

back of his great grey wig as he a-hem'd through his nose, a salute of professional dignity.

Doctor Estlake and his friend coolly bowed, but the man of physic not easily intimidated, shook the hand of the former with both his, and eager to obtain his approbation exclaimed in a sonorous accent, "Worthy Sir! I am rejoiced to obtain your co-operation with me, in administering a remedy on this occasion."

"For the sake of heaven! Mr. Technical," cried Mrs. Higgins, "don't go for to make a noise in my house about such an impossible story: the poor young ladies have grief enough without going for to say suspicious things."

“ My good neighbour,” he snufflingly returned, “ you don’t comprehend the law in this case.”

“ It is neither law nor gospel in my mind ;” she replied ; “ his reverence can tell you that.”

“ If Mr. Technical permits me to speak,” said the Doctor—

“ O most worthy Sir—”

“ I would ask,” he continued ; “ an explanation of the cause, and—”

“ Then study the effect ;” added Technical : “ that is the modus, good Sir.”

“The lady wishes to speak, Sir;” said Colonel Belnard, authoritatively.

The apothecary looked surprised, and Mrs. Higgins took courage from the respectful epithet assigned her.

“Why gentlemen, you must know,” said she, “that just ten days ago a lady and her two daughters came here, and the lady was very ill indeed; and I was so frightened, that of my own head I sent for Mr. Technical, and because he was not let to see her, he wants to make out that she died suddenly, and says he will bring the coroner’s inquest into my house.”

“Is it not *harsh* Mr. Technical,” said Doctor Estlake, “to agitate uneasiness

to the afflicted daughters, unless there are grounds for a public enquiry?"

"In a christian country, worthy Sir, we ought to be careful how people die."

"And pray is there no other than a christian reason for this exercise of your sagacity, Mr. Technical? demanded the Colonel."

"Good reason, Sir; operative reason. Women, valuable Sir, are well known to be artful designing people, and have some plan in every thing they do. When I went up stairs to visit the deceased, the young woman her daughter refused to tell me her name, place of abode, or cause of her dissolution."



“Probably,” answered the Colonel, “she thought your questions impertinent.”

Technical a-hem’d very loud, and took snuff.

“And possibly,” added Doctor Estlake, “as the old woman her mother is actually dead, the young woman her daughter thought your interrogatories at least superfluous.”

“She explained as much good Sir ”

“She was certainly right,” observed Colonel Belnard, “and you ought to remember that it is very dangerous to attach suspicion where there are not suf-

ficient grounds to establish what you may think proper to assert."

"Assert? my good Sir, I asserted nothing; only that I think it very extraordinary."

"In an old woman to die?"

"She was not old, Sir," said Mrs. Higgins; "she was young, and almost as handsome as her daughters."

"Do you know nothing of them?" asked the Doctor.

"Nothing, Sir; only that they came here last Tuesday was a week; the driver told me they came from Cowes, and were going to London, but the poor sick lady

could not bear the carriage, so they stopped here, and work enough we had to get her up stairs. I thought she would have died, she looked in such pain, but she never complained, and strove to keep it from her daughters."

"Something odd in that? worthy Sir."

"Peace;" commanded the Colonel. "Would it not be well Doctor to offer your services—"

"And protection?" added the Doctor. "Surely;—Mrs. Higgins will request for me the honor of being permitted to speak to them."

Mrs. Higgins willingly carried up the message, and Mr. Technical a-hem'd with additional cadence.

“ Good Sir,” said he, “ these women will impose on you. When they see your cloth they will study how to make the application.”

“ You pay my cloth a compliment,” said the Doctor coolly; “ but as you insinuate the necessity of ascertaining against your suspicions, this gentleman shall accompany me to witness the legality of my enquiries, and his evidence will be found at least as respectable as your’s.”

The operator of the pestal spread his hand on his bosom, and bowed low.

enough to certify the truth of this remark.

Mrs. Higgins now appeared, and desired the gentlemen to walk up, adding, that the lady requested Mr. Technical would go with them and repeat what he had before said.

"She wants to take the law of me, I suppose," said he, "but I have betrayed no symptom to that effect."

"You'd be badly off in that case," said Mrs. Higgins; "my life for it she has friends to stand by her: she looks as if she never was used to be contradicted."

"We follow you, Madam," said the Doctor.

The good woman remounted the stairs, followed by the champions and accuser.

On reaching the first landing-place she threw open a door, and discovered a bed, on which were seated two female figures loosely habited in black. The face of one was concealed in the bosom of the other, who bent over her in the attitude of consolation. The lifeless body was wholly covered, but the impression of are mingled with this scene an interest, which the Doctor and his young friend experienced in full force.

“The gentlemen, Madam;” said Mrs. Higgins.

The weeping girl started, and pressed her handkerchief to her eyes while her

sister arose to receive the expected visitors.

Prepared as they were for something extraordinary, the Doctor and Colonel Belnard were yet astonished to behold a countenance which the majesty of heaven had marked for its own ! and her figure, though carelessly wrapped in a loose gown, betrayed in every motion her internal superiority. No tear obscured the calm lustre of her eye ; her dignity was that of a celestial spirit, which in condescending to take a mortal form, cannot stoop to the weakness of human nature : but her pallid cheek strongly evinced that though beyond the reach of pity, she had not forgotten she was a daughter.

“ I—I beg pardon, Madam ;” said the Doctor in confusion—“ we will retire.”

“ I hope not,” she replied with a smile, in which anguish of heart was triumphant ; “ from *your* profession I may expect humanity.”

“ You hear that ?” cried Technical ; “ I told you Doctor how it would be ; but it is justice we want.”

“ You want nothing, Sir,” said Belnard, glowing with indignation ; “ your intrusion is altogether unnecessary.”

“ I am careless of it now,” said the lady, “ my mother cannot be disturbed.”

“ Observe !” still persisted the apo-



the cary; "you observe Sir; a medical man refused admittance? How the deceased came by her death is the question?"

The lady turned her eyes full on him; but they expressed neither surprise or resentment.

"What do you dare to utter?" exclaimed Colonel Belnard.

"Worthy Sir; good Sir; I only wanted to save the Doctor trouble by recommending a few questions."

"I perceive your innuendo Mr. Technical," replied the Doctor, "and if you cannot certainly substantiate it, you will do well to withdraw."

“ Certain?—I cannot be quite certain.—”

The Colonel could no longer suppress his indignation; he drew the apothecary and Mrs. Higgins to the window and spoke to them in a low voice, but with wonderful effect; they became instantly submissive, and in silent dismay obeyed his orders by precipitately leaving the room.

“ Will you now, Madam” resumed the Doctor, affectionately taking her hand, “ permit me to offer you our best and kindest services? for the world I would not intentionally wound your feelings, but a few enquiries are necessary to satisfy others—not myself.”

“Your voice is that of kindness,” she replied; “I will answer you, Sir, at least with truth.”

He advanced to the bed, and raising a napkin discovered the face of a woman, about the age of forty, which strongly resembled her who had addressed him, and which though in death, was infinitely lovely. He took up the hand that lay on the quilt and felt the pulse.

“She is gone for ever said he; but—”

A faint shriek from the weeping girl interrupted him; she started up, and throwing her arms round her sister's neck, wildly exclaimed, “O Olivia! must it be?”

"Marcella!" she answered in a commanding tone, "in such a moment as this, weakness is but self-indulgence."

"You are in the right," replied the younger, resuming her seat; "I will command myself."

The Doctor's curiosity was strongly excited, but something like suspicion obtruded.

"Will you pardon me, Madam, for pursuing this subject," said he; "what was the complaint of which this lady died?"

"A slow fever and consumption."

"And why did she refuse assistance?"

“ We were going to London to obtain it, Sir.”

“ But you have been here some days : there are persons of skill in Southampton :” then suddenly recollecting himself he added ; “ forgive me, Madam ? the means might be wanting.”

“ No ;” replied the fair stranger ; “ I may evade your questions, but I will not deceive you ; the means were not wanting, but my mother wished to die unknown and unnoticed : in London she might have mingled with the crowd ; here it would be impossible.”

“ She wished then to elude enquiries ?”

"General enquiries, Sir."

"Was she of this country, Madam?"

"Yes, Sir."

"Of what part, may I ask?"

"I do not exactly know, Sir: for some time she has resided abroad."

"And you with her?"

"Part of the time."

"Your accent is not that of a foreigner?"

"It is not: but, Sir," she added with an expression of feminine gentleness, that

took from the severity of her reproach ;  
 “ are these questions necessary to the  
 point in suspense ? ”

“ Perhaps not altogether ; but I confess  
 to you, Madam, that I wish you could con-  
 fide in us.”

“ So far as I can—” she replied ; “ I  
 must be indeed ungrateful to decline your  
 benevolent interference ; I will therefore  
 freely inform you that we have not lately  
 resided in England, but circumstances of  
 a most distressing nature compelled us to  
 return to it. My mother in a foreign  
 country received the assurance of a phy-  
 sician that her recovery was impossible,  
 and she believed herself justified in refus-  
 ing further advice.”

“Was it considerations of health that induced her to visit this kingdom?”

“Sorrowful as it may be,”

“No, Sir;” and then she added, faintly smiling, “I permit me to assure you that my evidence will not be found contradictory, though I do not promise it will be candid.”

“But, Sir,” said she, “—was I not right?”

The Doctor was confounded at the reproof, and doubly astonished; and his young friend yet more surprised that he appeared incredulous of the stranger’s justification.

“We have suffered much,” she resumed, “even in this country; our ship was wrecked, and every soul on board perished but my mother, my sister, and myself: and in this preservation of our



lives we also saved some valuables which enabled us to think of getting forward to London."

"Good God!" exclaimed Belnard; "so lovely, so persecuted, and so friendless!"

"Are you wholly unknown in England, Madam?" still pursued the Doctor.

"No," she replied: "the gentleman who nobly risked his life to preserve ours is gone to London to prepare for our arrival."

"I grieve indeed," said Doctor Estlake, "that he is not here, as the necessity of satisfying even ignorance is apparent. Without proof I cannot do this."

but so persuaded am I of your escape from blame, that I will myself call in two surgeons, who will at once answer for you to the public, and take every precaution that no respect to the body shall be neglected."

"Is this alternative inevitable, Sir?—does the law require it?" there was a combination of anguish, dignity, and sweetness in the countenance of the fair speaker, as she pronounced these words.

"My dear young lady," answered the Doctor, "the law does require a certainty respecting the manner of death of every individual."

"Then, Sir, I will at once inform you, that my angel mother died of a wound."

Both gentlemen started back in horror, and the weeping girl energetically clasped her hands.

"But," resumed Olivia, with an air that imposed the solemnity of truth; "it was not inflicted by my hand!"

"What demon of malice could suppose it?" murmured Bernard.

"Circumstanced as I am," she placidly returned, "I may expect to be accused of horror; I can submit to the atonement, but," and she looked indignantly; "I do not deserve the stigma!"

"O, my mother!" exclaimed the afflicted Mercella, "it is for my sake you

are no more, and the life of you Olivia is, perhaps, endangered."

"BEWARE!"—repeated Olivia, slowly;  
 "REMEMBER."

"My dear and admirable young lady," cried Doctor Estlake, "allow me to represent to you the consequence of persevering in this mystery? without other proof than your own, all my efforts cannot avail." "I know it," she replied; "and since you have learned so far, I will entrust to you the only proof I possess.—In this paper is written the solemn oath of my mother, taken as a precaution against any consequences that might possibly accrue to me on an investigation. It is signed by her own hand, and witnessed by a

gentleman who will answer for the truth of it when called upon."

The Doctor and his friend cast their eyes over the lines, and started at the signature of the witness. The words were as follow:

"I the undersigned, who, for important reasons, have assumed the name of Vere, do solemnly swear in the presence of heaven, and the Almighty disposer of rewards and punishments, that the wound by which I now suffer, and which I am assured will ultimately cause my death, was inflicted by the hand of a man who can never be traced or discovered, as the perpetration was committed in the presence of persons bound, by the most indissoluble ties to conceal the criminal from justice: and I solemnly abjure all those who may become acquainted with the circumstance, to avoid all intimations, direct or indirect, which can lead to a suspicion, or implication, of the guilty person!" (Signed)

"OLIVIA VERE."

"Arthur Belnard,  
merchant, residing  
in Amsterdam."

} "Witness."

“It is my uncle’s name and place of abode,” said the Colonel, “and is fully satisfactory.”

“Your uncle!” repeated Miss Vere.

“Yes, Madam! unhappily I do not know him, but his name will in itself secure you the protection and services of every individual of his family.”

“Why? Madam,” cried Doctor Estlake; “why did you not shew me this before? it would have saved enquiries equally mortifying to you and to me.”

“Because,” she answered, “I hoped to have stifled those enquiries, which, if pursued, can only lead to new mystery. It is repugnant to my nature thus to act in

the shade; but my obligations to it are so sacred, that could you know them, I might hope for your approbation."

"You have it already, incomparable and inexplicable woman!" warmly exclaimed the Doctor. "Your manner carries conviction irresistible of your exculpation."

"May lightning blast the miscreant who rendered it necessary!" fervently repeated the Colonel.

"No!" returned Olivia, impressively, "let me rather bless the land where the steel of the assassin is sheathed in the terrors of justice; where innocence is protected from the grasp of vice, and the oppression of avarice!"

“O, that my mother now lived, to know the security of her children!” exclaimed the sister of Miss Vere,—“only for——”

“PROVIDENCE!” interrupted Olivia; “we must submit to his decrees.”

Doctor Estlake and his friend, with difficulty, suppressed their sentiments of surprise and admiration in the awful presence of the lifeless mother, and her inexplicable daughters; but they recollected how essential might be their services, and offered them with equal delicacy and earnestness.

To their proposals, for conducting the funeral, Miss Vere most gratefully acceded, on the express condition that no



pecuniary obligation was added to the debt of kindness. "It is not pride," said she, "that urges me to refuse your generosity; believe me, in this instance, my motive is superior."

Her voice, her manner, her countenance, were all convincing proofs that her resolutions were founded on principles too solid to be easily shaken. She also refused to leave the apartment while it contained her mother; and her wondering and admiring new friends were obliged to acquiesce with merely her permission under certain restrictions, of providing the necessary arrangements for the interment of the deceased, which was settled to take place on the third day following; and in the mean time they were entreated not to take offence at her

requesting that till after that period, they might not ask to see her.

The gentlemen promised every thing, and filled with admiration, astonishment, esteem, and compassion, took leave of these interesting and mysterious STRANGERS.

Technical, who had departed from the chamber of the deceased in obedience to very persuasive commands, could not, however, resist the invitation of Mrs. Higgins to step into her parlour, and marvel a little on the obstinacy of the old lady in refusing his efficacious nostrums; and so intent were they in considering the state of the case, that the Doctor and his companion had nearly reached the bottom of the stairs before

they heard the creaking of shoes, which instantly struck them with panic. The apothecary whipped nimbly into the china closet, and was as nimbly locked in by Mrs. Higgins, who regained her seat and her knitting by the time the gentlemen completed their entrance into the room; but in shutting in the corporeal part of her squat associate, she unfortunately shut out his skirts; and the raven black cloth, and japanned black buttons, being instantly recognized by Colonel Belnard, he raised his voice sufficiently to be heard by the prisoner, whose ear he concluded to be at no great distance from the extremity of his raiment.

“We are glad to find, Mrs. Higgins,” said he, “that your conduct to these ladies has obtained their approbation, and

request you will do your utmost to render your house as comfortable as possible to them while they remain. As for that meddling gentleman, Mr. Technical, you may inform him, that if he presumes again to intrude or cause them the least uneasiness, Sir Thomas shall hear of the insult he has offered to two ladies who are nearly connected with my family."

"Lord, be good to me, Sir!" cried Mrs. Higgins; "for certain we neither of us knew that."

"Know it now!" said he; "they are Wards of my uncle who resides abroad; take care you do not displease them; for so surely as you do, so surely you will repent it."

"As I hope for mercy, Sir," she replied, "I would not offend Sir Thomas, nor your uncle, nor one of your name."

The entrapped hero of the bolus echoed like assurances in a snuffling groan.

"You will tell Technical to keep quiet," said Doctor Estlake; "as a friend I advise him not to incur the resentment of such a family."

Mrs. Higgins gave her protestations of every thing demanded, and opening the door with a profound curtsey, more of fear than love, she saw them depart; but in returning to the parlour, her alarm for herself obliterated all recollection of the prisoner, till the sonorous sounds of— "for the love of G—d, worthy

neighbour, "let me out !" started her from her reverie, and she hastily relieved the perspiring delinquent, whose fears by no means originated in fancy. Sir Thomas Belnard was his landlord, and arrears of rent stared him in the face with more eloquent impressions of silence than all the injunctions the most learned orator could possibly deduce for his conviction.

## CHAP. III.

### REMOVALS.

**DOCTOR ESTLAKE**, at the age of sixty-five, possessed strength of feeling little inferior to that which animated the bosom of Colonel Belnard at the age of twenty-seven; and in undertaking the funeral of Mrs. Vere, he had secretly determined to become the friend and protector of her daughters. To this resolution he was actuated by motives very different from mere curiosity; he beheld a woman young, lovely, and unfortunate; whose manners impressed esteem and commanded respect, left in a situation as

unhappy as unprecedented; and who appeared wholly destitute of all consolation or assistance, except that which she derived from her own sense of rectitude and firmness of resolution to overcome evils that must sink a mind unsupported by religious confidence. His persuasion of this last sentiment was in itself sufficient to secure his friendship: his heart was at all times the seat of urbanity and beneyolence; and his temper, though impatient to a fault, was entirely free from the bitterness of resentment, or the malice of revenge, and much more irritable to the injuries of those he loved than any that could be offered to himself. His affection for Colonel Bernard, was that of a father, who having, with unwearied attention, moulded the mind of his pupil according to the model of his



own wishes, glories in the work he has achieved. He had been his private tutor, to which circumstance he owed his fortune, and centered in this, his favourite, the warmest sentiments his heart could boast.

That in this extraordinary occurrence their ideas should assimilate must be supposed, but the age and profession of the one gave to his offers of attention the characteristic of a father, and obtained for him an evident preference in the interview they had with Miss Vere. Colonel Belnard could not, however, suppress a wish that his uncle's name, to the important exculpation, might entitle him to a share in the offers of friendship; and when he canvassed the subject with his old friend, and they mutually agreed to offer

these strangers an asylum, Belnard warmly contended for the right of nominating his father's house. Doctor Estlake was more inclined to offer his own; but as he could not dispute the authority of the Colonel's claim, he promised to leave the election to the choice of the ladies themselves.

But as no step could be taken till after the interment, they were compelled, as yet, to endure the suspense. The day at length arrived for the awful solemnity, and both gentlemen attended as chief mourners: the persons for whom they were thus actively employed did not appear, but Mrs. Higgins brought a message to Doctor Estlake from Miss Vere, requesting, if he could, with convenience, spare half an hour in the evening, that

she might have the honor of seeing him. Colonel Belnard felt half mortified, half offended, at being omitted in this invitation; but when the Doctor, at the time appointed, prepared for his visit, he walked with him to the house of Mrs. Higgins, and willingly agreed to sit in her parlour while his friend remained above stairs.

The good woman was extremely anxious to convince this heir apparent of her landlord, that she had paid due obedience to his injunctions, respecting the ladies for whom he was so interested; but she could not help expressing something of her surprise at the singularity of their conduct. She could make no discovery,

or form no conjecture, of who they were, or of any circumstance attached to them; and perceiving that she was now heard with more anxiety than displeasure, she ventured to speak more freely.

“For my part, Sir,” said she, “I would have been glad at heart to comfort Miss, but I felt quite foolish, as it were, when I went to speak to her about grieving, when she don’t grieve at all, as I can see. Yet, if she was not sorry, why would she sleep all night beside the corpse with her arm thrown over the neck? Lord, keep us!—I wondered at her courage!”

The Colonel looked surprised.

“It is true, Sir, I assure you, though I’m not quite sure that she sleeps neither,

for every morning she looked so weary, and so pale, I used to think she was going to faint; but she always said she was very well, and the only thing that seems to make her uneasy is her sister fretting so much. The poor thing does, indeed, take on sadly, and refuses to eat or drink, though Miss makes me get every thing nice and comfortable for her: they have money enough."

"Certainly," said the Colonel. "They are of family and fortune."

Mrs. Higgins feared she had gone too far; and the Doctor soon after descending from his visit, his young friend departed with him.

"I am afraid, Charles," said the old

gentleman, as they proceeded; "I am afraid you will be half angry with me; I have prevailed on these strangers to come to my house without once mentioning that of your father."

"And why? my dear Sir."

"I will tell you truly; they are both lovely women, and evidently of more than common rank: to you they would be dangerous companions."

"You ought to know, Sir," said Bernard, smiling, to conceal his disappointment; "that I am not susceptible."

"If you were I should not think precaution so necessary to preserve you from forming an inconsiderate attachment.

Were you like Waltham, to become the victim of every pretty foot and well-turned elbow, a remedy might easily be found in a new object of admiration; but where nature and refinement combine their most exalted efforts to render a woman equally captivating to the eye and the understanding, her powers of conquest are too certain to be imprudently braved. Such a woman, once beloved, can never be forgotten; and your heart once surrendered, would, I fear, be irrecoverable."

"Why, in that case, would you fear it?"

"Because I suspect that the eldest, who, though less beautiful than her sister, is more suited to your taste, is already engaged."

Belnard started.

“ I would rather,” resumed the Doctor, “ that your conviction of the necessity for avoiding Miss Vere was derived more from theory than experience. If she is the woman I believe her ; if the elegance of her external attractions are derived from internal excellence, your case would be desperate,”

“ Even were she engaged?”

“ Ah, Charles !—— were you tempted to *regret* her engagement, you at once commit a crime and incur the punishment !”

“ I have,” continued the Doctor, finding his companion silent ; “ I have offered



them a residence in my lodge, and Miss Vere, who answered for both, accepted it with gratitude, *for a time*; but her confusion in pronouncing these words excited my suspicions that she will not be long her own mistress, and if my conjectures are well founded, I candidly declare to you my earnest wishes, that your first interview with her may be the last."

"I am not such a slave to my passions," said Belnard, "or so accustomed to submit to their impulse, as to make myself unhappy for an object which I know to be unattainable."

"I believe so, indeed," answered the Doctor; "and if you can affirm to me that the sight of Miss Vere has excited

no other interest than that arising from curiosity, I will no longer insist on the danger of your investigating her character."

Belnard coloured deeply, and laughingly answered, that the election of fancy could not fairly be termed a choice of the heart.

"It is at least a step towards it which I would caution you against; and though I must regret the temporary privation of your society, I dare not venture so greatly to risque your peace of mind as to desire it, while these incognito's are my guests."

"Have you actually settled for their removal?" he gravely demanded.

“I have——; my sister, you know, is violent in her friendships as in her detestations, and her daughter is her echo; if fancy leads *them* to a preference, I shall rejoice; if not, I can certainly secure their attention and respect, and will by this night's post, write to that effect.”

“But have you no apprehensions that Mrs. Crank may be displeased at the intrusion of two pretty women in the very orbit of her daughter's conquests?”

“No; for these women, even if they do appear, are not of that class in which Sophia will find competitors: and I can venture to promise her a thousand compliments, where these two sisters will not receive one.”

“Your description is contradictory.”

“No, my dear fellow; few men will aspire to my protegeés; those who are capable of the elevation will not easily be induced to abandon it.”

“It is not safe to listen to you, Sir;” said Belnard, endeavouring to rally; “when do they consent to make *you* happy in their society?”

“In the course of a week, by which time Mrs. Higgins will have completed the purchase of their mourning.”

The conversation was now dropped, and, as if by mutual agreement, not once again renewed. Doctor Estlake appeared

to repent having said so much, and Colonel Belnard that he had listened so attentively.

But on the evening of the fifth day, when these two friends were sitting over their wine, conversing with their usual confidence on every subject but the one which perhaps both thought of most, Mattocks brought in a note addressed to his master, which, he said, required an immediate answer. The Doctor opened it, and on seeing the signature eagerly read the following:—

“Can you forgive me, Sir, for trespassing on the kindness you have already so largely bestowed, and forbear accusing me of caprice in requesting to know if we may hope to obtain the asylum you promised, two days earlier than our own appointment? a gen-

tleman has taken lodgings in this house, and made some enquiries, which alarm us into the resolution of leaving it the first moment you grant us permission to do so. As yet, Sir, I feel myself responsible to your good opinion for every step in which I *may* take your advice and guidance. Need I re-urge you to observe a silence which this event renders doubly necessary, and, alas! doubly painful?"

"Pardon me, if under these disadvantages, I dare hope your esteem will not be denied to,

"Dear Sir,

"ever with gratitude,

"Your most obedient,

"OLIVIA——"

"I believe," said the Doctor, after perusing the letter twice; "I believe I must shew it you, as the best excuse I can offer for so suddenly leaving you."

Belnard, with affected carelessness, ran his eye over the lines, and requested that no apology might be offered as he could as easily return to Belvale that evening as two days later. The Doctor accordingly made his arrangements without further consultation, and his young friend, with more regret than he wished to acknowledge, in less than an hour after assisted him into his chaise, in which he had previously settled to call on his new companions and already much beloved guests.

Colonel Belnard, for the first time in his life, felt afraid of his own reflections, and entirely dissatisfied with himself for being so; to elude them was his only remedy, and he determined on setting

out for Belvale, which was situated near the little town of Brochenhurst, on the borders of New Forest, and not more than seventeen miles distant from Southampton.

He gave orders to his servant to follow with his horses, and proceeded on foot through the town; but in passing near one of the principal Hotels he felt his arm arrested, and turned to see by whose hand.

“Hah, Colonel!” said a gentleman, who he did not in the moment recollect; “upon my soul I am glad to see you.”

Belnard now recognized one of the many friends of the inconsiderate Wal-



them; and the possibility of learning something of him suddenly recurring, he submitted to the familiar grasp of Mr. Dimple, and when the customary salutations were concluded, asked if he knew where Waltheim had hid himself?

“ Hid himself! that is the exact term, my dear Colonel,” lisped Dimple, with a smile of approbation. “ Waltheim has been hiding; and to some purpose faith.”

“ May I ask where? and for what?”

“ Surely; and I am happy to give you every possible intelligence; I caught him about a fortnight ago in London; as busy as any man, hiring a house.”

“A house!”

“Yes, faith; he is going to be married; you did not know that?”

“No, really;” replied the Colonel, carelessly.

“I thought so,” answered Dimple, “and spoke to him very severely on committing such a folly without your permission.”

“My permission!” repeated the Colonel; “I only presumed to give him my advice.”

“O! I know that; but it is the general phrase, you know, for advice; and

'pon my soul, poor Walthelm wants advice; he is not very deep, as I guess,—hey?"

"*You* could hardly discover that, Mr. Dimple."

"Why, certainly, my dear Colonel," replied the pliant lisper, wholly unwounded by the point of satyr, "I did not actually ascertain the fact—I guessed as much, and it is possible I may be mistaken."

"Very possible; but what fact did you ascertain?"

"That he is going to be married to a very fine woman, whom I shall have great pleasure in introducing you to?"

"Has he left her in your protection?"

"Not absolutely ;—but something like it—he told me where to find her."

"That, no doubt, is a permission to such a man as you, Mr. Dimple."

"Exactly so, Colonel; Waltheim is one of the best fellows in the world."

"He is not very cunning, at least."

"That is precisely my idea of him; you shall breakfast with me in the morning, and I will present you to this lovely creature."

"You are very polite," answered the

Colonel; "but I am now on my way out of town."

"Where are you going?" asked Dimple.

"Why do you enquire?"

"Because Waltheim is gone to your father's in search of you, and I thought you might contrive to make that your way."

"Belnard looked much surprised.

"True, 'pon my life," lisped Dimple: "to tell you my opinion of the affair, I think, that without your advice, he may cut but a shabby figure, marrying the

devil knows who, that he picked up by chance at the Land's End; 'pon my faith it's a fact."

"Yet you seem to know the lady?"

"At least as well as he does; and before this time to-morrow I shall know her a great deal better."

"You give yourself too much trouble on his account;" said the Colonel.

"Pshaw! my dear Colonel! to serve a friend so essentially I would do any thing. It was on this principle I engaged Lady Senegal and her two sisters in his favour, and I can safely promise you speedy information."

“ Lady Senegal is, no doubt, a powerful assistant.”

“ I thought so; in this way, admirable ! she sets every engine to work, and it is impossible for any one to escape her.”

“ Was Sir Sentiment joined in your friendly plans ?”

“ Sir Sentiment !—why sure he is gone on an expedition ten months ago to the river Amazons. On my soul it’s a fact ;” he lispingly reiterated ; “ he is gone on a very important discovery.”

“ Under the direction of government, I suppose ?”

“ That is the probability: you know he

is a very intelligent man, and quite fit for the business; he is gone to find out whether the women there are such great monstrous creatures as they are reported to be, and whether they live together in herds, or mix with the men of their own nation."

Belnard laughed aloud.

"It's rather a foolish plan, in my mind," resumed Dimple, "and I advised him strongly against it; but, like all men of his way of thinking, he is very obstinate in his own opinions."

"I thought he was rather obstinate in his wife's opinions; at least when she is present he dare not utter his own."



“No; ’pon my soul you judge right there; I have hinted as much to him; but he is a worthy man in his way, and I have known him to give some very good dinners.”

“He is then a valuable friend,” said Belnard drily.

“Certainly; but must you go to-night, my dear Colonel?” cried Dimple; “we shall have a *petit souper* at her Ladyship’s, and if you come I will give you the choice of her sisters: it is quite the same to me to which of them I pay my *devoirs*.”

“I thank you, good Dimple,” said Colonel Belnard; “but as my horses have overtaken me, and I must over-

take the night, to your offers of either I am compelled to answer, neither."

"He! he! he! Colonel; 'pon my life that's a good one; but harkee! don't tell Waltheim I'm on the look out for him; he is a testy fellow, but I love him too well to quarrel for mere sport."

"I believe you," replied Belnard; "good evening."

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## CHAP. IV.

## INTRODUCTION TO A FAMILY.



THE father of Colonel Belnard was a gentleman of respectable rank and fortune, and yet more respectable character. Early in life he had married against the approbation of his family, who avenged their pride by every effort of illiberal abuse; but as the eldest son, he could not be deprived of his legal inheritance, and by a series of events, he was at this time next in succession to the title and estates of a distant relation. He had been bred to the bar, but finding the study of the law too tedious for his

disposition, and the contumely of his wealthy relations too galling to his spirit, he retired with his family to his paternal estate in the farthest part of Hampshire, and devoted his time to the improvement of his farms, and the education of his children.

A considerable time elapsed without any interruption from his former acquaintance, when Sir Thomas Belnard, the owner of the family castle, and hereditary honors of the Belnard name, among other of the whims which sometimes occupied his brain, took the singular one of visiting his cousin at Belvale. Sir Thomas, when a young man was much esteemed, though always considered eccentric; but an unfortunate perseverance in every resolution, and a determination to gratify every wish,

however difficult might be the attainment, had deprived him of the affections of all his associates. Early in life he had devoted his heart to a very lovely and accomplished woman, who, except in fortune, was every way his superior: this consideration he however deemed sufficient to ensure success, and with a person very ill calculated to inspire the tender passion, persecuted her with addresses which she steadily refused. Her gentleness of character he mistook for wayward modesty, and urged her father to enforce authority in his favour; some very violent measures were adopted, and the young lady eluded all his offered advantages of fortune by an elopement. This was an injury he never forgave; his house, which had been prepared for her reception in all the pomp of expence and richness of taste

peculiar to that time, was quickly dismantled of its furniture, and even her name was never afterwards pronounced in his hearing; he plunged himself into the most extravagant dissipations, his fortune became endangered, his health lost, and his peace of mind more than ever destroyed. It was supposed that he had severely repented the persuasion of success which prevented his adopting more lenient measures to win the hand of the lady, but he ever from that period execrated the sex, and on retiring to retrieve his broken fortune and constitution, he lived like a gloomy discontented penurious old Misanthrope: The tyranny and caprice of his temper daily became more firmly rooted, and he might be truly said to answer the description of the outcast

*of society, his hand was against every man, and every man's hand against him.*

The good qualities which had once marked his character, were by Mr. Bernard still remembered; he was besides a relation, which secured to him an affectionate and warm reception, and the inflexibility of his temper insensibly gave way to the undeviating serenity of his cousin's family. All there was peace and unanimity; they quarrelled not with his caprice, but they never adopted it, and he had at least the generosity to rejoice, that since he had no children of his own to inherit his possessions, they were to descend to the children of him whom he respected entirely, and loved as well—as he could.

To the youngest of Mr. Belnard's two sons, he, in a short time evinced the most pointed partiality. The little Charles was ever certain of being well received at the castle, and often sent home with a trifling present: at length he made a formal proposal of adopting him as his own, and though the title and annexed estates could not be alienated from the direct successor, he had wealth sufficient to render the offer in this respect altogether unexceptionable. In every other instance, alas! it was not so; Mr. Belnard saw very much to object, but he feared to refuse, and having consulted with his wife, who, with tears of bitter reluctance, consented, he committed his little Charles to the entire guidance of Sir Thomas. The baronet was vain of his young charge, and spared no expence on



his education ; but he knew not the feelings of a father, and exercised an austere authority which severely mortified his young dependant. The natural nobleness of Charles spurned the oppression equally distributed to vice and virtue, and such at last was the disgust occasioned by the relentless sternness of his patron, that he one day left the castle in the determination never again to become its inmate. He pursued his way across the fields to his father's house, resolving boldly to declare his intention ; but on entering the parlour, he found his mother in tears, and his little sister, then but two years old, endeavouring to console her. He learned that his brother, then at the age of seventeen, had been drawn into a society of horse-jockeys, who had involved him in debts which his father must pay ; and

what was yet more deplorable, the lad himself, far from offering an atonement for his errors, had joined a company of strolling players. "You see, my son," said the afflicted mother, "the event which I so deeply lamented was designed by Providence as a blessing. I grieved too much at resigning you to Sir Thomas, whose manner of thinking is so different from that of your father; but the education and profession he will give you, will enable you to provide for your sister when we are gone. Henry's debts even now affect the estate, and when it becomes his own I can have no dependance on his justice or humanity."

Charles, young as he was, (then only twelve years) was struck dumb with grief and indignation; he returned to his lately

abjured home in a state of mind widely different from that in which he had left it, and secretly resolved to become one day the protector, not only of his sister, but of his family. From that moment he bent his thoughts to the completion of his purposes, and the peculiarity of his situation, though often extremely painful, had the happiest influence on the conduct of his more manly years. His heart glowing with the affections of nature, and inspired with the energy of hope, continually looked forward to the period in which he might be enabled to secure an independence to those he so truly loved; his mind acquired a degree of strength, and his judgment a solidity far beyond his years, while the persevering determination of his temper preserved to him a continual command over himself, and

regulated his conduct as he advanced in life. In the vicissitudes of a camp, and the temptations to dissipation which surrounded him, he undeviatingly pursued the plans he had projected for the accomplishment of his design; and though often subject to the severe ridicule of his companions, he ever obtained the esteem and respect of all who knew him. To a warm heart he united a sound head and a highly cultivated understanding, and though easily excited to contempt or indignation, he was slow to emotions of resentment or revenge. Prudent, but not mercenary; generous, but not ostentatious; firm, but not unfeeling; and just, but not severe. To a taste for simple and domestic pleasures he joined an elevation of soul and a refinement of sentiment that turned him from vice, and attracted him to virtue; and

these qualifications were concentrated in a person eminently handsome; to manners, eminently polished, and rank both of birth and profession.

The early vices of his elder brother had, happily for his family, brought him to an early grave; but his father had been compelled to curtail many of the comforts of life to pay the debts the dissolute youth had contracted: to make up these privations the young soldier perseveringly denied himself the gratifications of selfish indulgence, and not only cleared his father from all incumbrances, but secured to his sister a suitable independance.

Though now heir apparent to the honors and wealth of his family name, these acts of duty were much too liberal

for the contracted spirit of Sir Thomas ; who, in a fit of caprice, withdrew his favour. The Colonel acknowledged gratitude for the education and profession he had received from him, but asserted his own right to devote both to the service of those from whom he had received his being. Expecting concessions, Sir Thomas could ill brook this independance of his will and authority ; he threatened vengeance, but without effect ; his young relation was still the same, and while he opposed his wishes, behaved to him with the attention of a son. The storm of the old man's temper gradually lessened, though Charles could no longer boast his partial favour and affection, but the loss of this was largely supplied by a tenfold increase on the part of those he had so highly benefitted, who exultingly glo-

ried in the son and the brother ; and these dear and beloved friends now received him, not only with the affections of nature, but the overflowings of gratitude.

It was late at night when the Colonel arrived at Belvale, and his entrance was doubly welcome for being unexpected. The mutual congratulations were warm and sincere, and when they had a little subsided, he enquired if Waltheim had lately made his appearance there. His sister replied, that he came two days before, and expressed the greatest disappointment at not meeting his friend. " We wanted him," added she, " to go to Southampton, but he did not like encountering the Doctor, and has taken a trip to Weymouth to pass away the time

till your expected arrival here. He is certainly," pursued, Constance, laughing, "labouring with some terrible secret which I wanted him to confide to my good keeping, but I annoyed him too much, and to vex me he made the effort of keeping it to himself; we shall have it all no doubt in an hour or two after we see him again."



## CHAP. V.

## A NEW CHARACTER.

THE first, the second, and the third day elapsed after the arrival of Colonel Belnard and no Waltheim appeared; but at the end of a week when the family were sitting down to supper, they heard a ringing at the house bell, and immediately, the person expected was announced. He started in as much amazement at seeing his friend as if he had supposed him in another kingdom, and was so earnest in his self-congratulations on this unlooked for happiness, that Mrs. Bel-

nard at length reminded him that supper cooled: his apologies were now offered in equal profusion, and he added as he took his place; "You know Ma'am how anxious I have been to see Charles."

"We know," said Constance, gravely; "and I have been telling him so this week past."

"Why, for heaven's sake, Colonel," exclaimed Waltheim, "are you here so long? How damn'd unfortunate I was!"

"Come, come;" said Constance, "don't drop your jaws, or you cannot eat; and I am sure you are hungry."

"That is true," he replied eagerly,

resuming his knife and fork; "I am devilish hungry, for I eat nothing since I left Bristol."

Bristol!!! repeated all.

"Yes; I have been there these two days;"—"but what have you been doing with yourself since, Belnard? It's a plaguay long time since I heard from you."

"That is because you did not enquire for me."

"Pardon me," returned Walthelm; "I wrote to Doctor Estlake about you, but he had not the politeness to answer my letter."

“Because you forgot to mention where he could address you.”

Poor Waltham was so overwhelmed with shame at this rebuke, that not even Constance could enjoy a laugh against him.

“Come,” said Belnard, “the past shall be forgotten; we may now begin a new account.”

“Upon my soul, Charles, you are very kind to me,” answered the confused culprit; “but I was so engaged I did not know which way to turn; I will tell you all to-morrow.”

“Tell it now;” said Constance.

“And you present? trust me I will not.”

“It don't signify to-night,” said she; “you may consult me to-morrow.”

Waltheim looked quite angry, and Mrs. Belnard, to turn the conversation, asked him what amusements he found in Bristol?

“None;” he replied; “I went with poor Forfair, who has burst a blood vessel, and is very ill indeed.”

“Is there any hope of his dying?” said Constance.

“Hope?” repeated Waltheim; “if you could see him you would not ask

that question; he is an object of compassion."

"Not a *worthy* object;" said the Colonel, "he treated his brother cruelly."

"Yes, so he says; and his death has made him quite miserable."

All looked aghast!

"True, indeed," resumed Walthelm; "poor Frank lost his life in less than a month after he landed in the West Indies."

Gaiety no longer presided at the table of Mr. Belnard; every face was clouded with concern, and Constance having vainly struggled with her tears, hastily

left the room. Conversation was entirely suspended; and the party immediately broke up.

The character of Waltheim was too well known to his friends, for any act of thoughtlessness, to occasion lasting displeasure; they had seen, and heard of a thousand giddy occurrences, none of which ever betrayed meanness or selfishness; and though he incessantly sinned and repented, offended and asked pardon, he had always evinced an affectionate and grateful heart; while the gaiety of his disposition, and the good natured attention of his manner, in the general routine of intercourse, won upon the feelings and against all caution of wisdom and gravity, gained upon esteem.

The next morning, when he appeared, he was therefore greeted as usual, and as usual took a very large portion of the conversation. Constance had apparently forgotten her grief of the evening before, and the name of Forfair was not again mentioned to disturb her vivacity.

“Well, Mr. Waltham;” said she, when breakfast was nearly concluded; “are you prepared to make your confession?”

“How do you know that I have one to make?” he replied.

“There is no question of that,” she answered, “I will speak with you about it presently.”



Waltham stared.

"I have been settling the affair in my own mind," she resumed, "and you will find me an excellent assistant."

"In what, pray?"

"In the aforesaid confession; I can help you out where your memory fails."

"You must be wiser than I suspected," he replied; "but you are just fishing to find it out."

"No, trust me;" she carelessly answered; "I have not now to learn it."

"Nor ever," he retorted; "trust me for that."

“Then why did you tell it to Peter; who told it to Stephen; who told it to Betty; who told it to me?”

Waltham fixed on her a stare of vacant amazement; “but she gravely nodded, and repeated the word,” why?

“Because,” said Belnard, “he has a great deal to boast of, and no man could have acted with more moderation under such circumstances.”

The stare was turned on the Colonel.

“I hear she is a squaw;” resumed Constance.

“She is a very fine woman, notwithstanding, said her brother.”

“And very much improved, since she took the ring out of her nose, and substituted a riband sash for a belt of wampum,” added Constance.

Waltheim, thoroughly convinced that his secret was discovered, affirmed with a dreadful oath, that she never wore either; and Constance no longer able to keep her countenance, burst into an immoderate fit of laughter, which again excited his suspicions that she was only in jest, and he looked at her doubtfully.

“At all events,” cried the Colonel, rising from table, “I am glad, Waltheim, you were not obliged to leave the kingdom in search of a wife; and that

your progress was arrested, though at the very LAND'S END."

Walthcim was again amazed, and his friend left the room.

"Follow him," said Constance; "now is your time."

"I believe so too," he replied, and instantly disappeared.

Belnard had expected this pursuit; he was going to walk across the fields on a visit of duty at the castle, and invited Walthcim to stroll that way. Already apprized by Dimple that something was in agitation, he was now convinced that it must be something important, and resolved to investigate the matter tho-

roughly, and treat it with seriousness, if not with severity.

“Come, my friend,” said he; “confide in me freely: you shall not find me hasty in my judgement; but if you wish for either my advice or assistance in any difficulty, I must be acquainted with the whole affair, without the reservation of a single circumstance.”

“I hope,” cried Waltheim, “you do not suppose me capable of deceiving you?”

“No, believe me! I am fully persuaded you never even attempted to deceive me, though you have often succeeded in deceiving yourself.”

“Do you allude to the present case?”

“No; because I am unacquainted with it: when you inform me, you shall have my serious and sincere opinion.”

“Then where shall I begin?” cried Waltham. “I am half afraid of you already.”

“Begin your narrative where you began your adventure; I will listen without interruption, and then deduce my conclusions.”

“Well, then: I will say nothing of your illness; I hate to think of it, and, to avoid seeing it, I resolved to go an excursion through some of the counties I had not before visited. Sometimes I

rambled on foot, sometimes on horse-back, but always alone; and I never was so happy in the whole course of my life. I have taken memorandums of every place, and when they are arranged you shall see them."

Belnard well knew he had no reason to apprehend a speedy perusal; and Waltheim proceeded.

"At last, my dear friend, after travelling a long zig zag journey, I found myself in Falmouth, and since I had gone so far I resolved to visit the extremity of the Kingdom. Accordingly I wandered down to Lizard Point, where I easily procured a fishing smack to carry me across the bay to Land's End, where I landed, and took up my lodging at the

village of Trevescan, exactly three hundred miles from London. From this place I rambled about, when the weather permitted; but it was the month of March, and of course not very serene."

"I had been here but a few days, when one evening the wind suddenly rose, and, before night, blew a rank storm. I could see from my window a wide expanse of ocean, and as the thick heavy clouds rolled over, they often emitted a gleam of light, which discovered to me the mountainous waves, dashing forward in tremendous majesty. At last I heard a signal of distress fired, and went out to see what was going forward for the assistance of the sufferers. A number of persons were assembled on the beach, from whom I learned, that a vessel had



just struck, and every soul on board perished. To a sight like this the inhabitants of the place were well accustomed, and I could easily observe, that hope of plunder predominated over feelings of humanity ; but had I even been able to procure help for those who still continued to demand it, the raging of the sea prevented all possibility of being of service, and by the time morning broke, the firing had ceased, and nothing was seen but the foaming flood."

"To lament was now useless, and I walked forward without knowing where ; but soon finding myself at a considerable distance from the town, I was about to return, when I observed a number of persons assembled on a ridge of rocks that projected into the sea: concluding

at once that something was the matter, I hastened towards it; but, good God! how shall I describe that moment? or can you imagine the sight of a vessel thrown upon the point of an immense rock, and deserted by one wave only to give place to the dreadful shock of another? such was the situation of the vessel I beheld. The rock she was thrown on was separated from that on which we stood; but though the distance was short, the men surrounding me declared, that no boat could live, and nothing could save the miserable creatures who clung to the shattered rigging. At length a huge wave, advancing its black front, passed entirely over the ship, and those about me uttered a shout of horror in the belief that all was lost; but in a moment we again distinguished that the part

which had hitched on the rock still remained, and on this we beheld three figures, whom, from the white dresses they wore, we plainly ascertained to be females."

"My sensations of agony amounted in this instant to madness, and springing into a boat which was fastened in a little creek immediately below me, I drew out my watch and offered it to the first who would assist me in preserving their lives. All stood motionless, till one man, more daring than the rest, said he would try what could be done. He coiled a rope round his own waist, and another round mine, and throwing the ends to his companions, directed me to hold him fast with one hand, and keep firm to the boat with the other, while he managed it; then

watching an opportunity, we affected our purpose, and reached the unhappy sufferers. It was in fact the work of a moment. The women, who were clinging to each other, and keeping to the wreck by the remains of the foremast, were instantly in our boat, and the succeeding wave lifting us to meet the clouds, threw us with violence on the shelving steep, from whence we were speedily rescued. All were more or less stunned by the shock, but the man and I soon recovered, and conveyed the exhausted sufferers to a cottage, where we gave them every assistance the place afforded, and I at length had the happiness to see them restored to their senses."

"The habitation we were in was how-

ever too wretched to provide even a sufficiency of cloaths to relieve them from the wet, and I proposed, difficult as might be the removal, to endeavour to get them forward to Penzance, which was the nearest place where medical and other aid could be procured. They willingly assented to the necessity of making the exertion; a chaise was brought to us with unhopèd for expedition, but the task was even more difficult than I imagined; the eldest of the ladies could ill bear to move, and when we at length got her into the chaise, her two daughters, with extreme caution and tenderness, supported her.—— Belnard!—— what is the matter?”

“The heat,——it is quite overcoming,”

he replied; “let us sit under the shade of this oak.—”

He threw himself on the green turf, and Waltheim being seated, resumed his story.

“In fine the journey was accomplished. I rode beside the chaise and saw what the mother suffered; but at Penzance we got to a comfortable inn, and she was put to bed, where she remained nearly a month attended only by her daughters: for though I proposed sending to Falmouth for a physician, if she doubted the skill of those the town afforded, she declined all assistance. Her daughters, in her sufferings, forgot their own, and finding no probability of her recovery in that place, or no possibility of her under-

taking the land journey, I proposed hiring a small vessel, in which they might, at such a season, coast it with convenience to London. This plan was entirely approved, and in a fortnight after we all embarked. And now, Belnard, comes my confession."

"Proceed;" he replied.

"I had seen but little of the ladies while at Penzance: the illness of Mrs. Vere precluded my visits, but when we got on board, and found the weather delightfully favourable, she thought herself relieved by sitting on deck, where she and her daughters passed most part of every day, and I had the happiness of sharing their society. Had you seen them, Belnard, you would not condemn

my rashness; when in their presence I was the happiest man in the world; when they retired, the most miserable: but though both the daughters were lovely, my heart soon made a choice; and may I own to you?—my tongue soon told it.”

“ By you who are unacquainted with the violence of love, this precipitancy may well be condemned. I had however little reason to doubt the respectability of the alliance, even independent of their manners and conversation, which were far beyond any that I had before deemed elegant; they had saved about their persons some very valuable jewels: but had Olivia been cloathed in wretchedness and poverty, I could not have resisted her attractions. Her expressions of gra-



itude were to the last degree affecting, and when she blessed me for preserving the lives of her mother and sister, I dared to ask herself for my reward.—”

“And—you obtained it?” falteringly, asked Belnard.

“You shall hear. As we proceeded on the voyage I found I hourly gained in the good opinion of Mrs. Vere, of whom I ventured to demand her daughter; you will one day see Olivia, my friend; and not only excuse, but sanction my choice. Her conduct, as a daughter and a sister, furnishes evidence sufficient of that she will adopt as a wife; and the beauty of her person, the elegance of her manners, the commanding reserve joined to the most bewitching softness, and

heroic courage, in the form of feminine delicacy, at once assured me that I was securing my own happiness and your approbation. — You are silent, Belnard; already am I condemned?”

“No, no;—pray proceed.”

“Such was the woman whose hand I demanded, without being ascertained of any one circumstance attached to her. All the intelligence I could obtain, was, that they came in a Swedish vessel, but from what part of the world they guardedly suppressed informing me: I was desired to ask no questions; to make no enquiries, for they could never be satisfied; and yet, such is the impression of RIGHT, they carry in the most mysterious

words, that it is impossible a moment to suspect them of WRONG."

"And you were accepted——without hesitation?"

"Ah!" answered Waltheim,—“I wish I could say without hesitation; I cannot indeed avoid believing, that *at first* I owed my acceptance more to Mrs. Vere's influence than my own; but I must proceed regularly.”

“The poor sick mother told me that I had her wishes for success with Olivia, and advised me to let the matter rest till some more favourable symptom appeared; in the mean time I should have opportunity for continuing my assiduities; but, unfortunately, Mrs. Vere became so ill

she could no longer bear the motion of the ship, and we were compelled to land at the Isle of Wight. Weakened and exhausted by fatigue, we feared she could not survive many hours; it was then I urged my suit, and then—I was accepted."

"When she came a little to herself, she had a long conversation with Olivia; after which I was summoned to attend; she was supported on the sofa by pillows, and her daughter sat beside her; both had been weeping excessively, but they dried their tears to receive me. There was a solemnity in their manner that even sickened me, and I found my emotions impossible to be restrained: Mrs. Vere was much affected; she gave me her hand, and endeavoured to speak,

but for some moments, her voice failed : her words, when she could utter them, sunk for ever on my memory."

"I have spoken to Olivia," said she, "on the subject you have so earnestly urged: she is sensible of your merits, and of our obligations; but it cannot be supposed, that surrounded and crushed by calamities, much greater than you are aware of, she could devote her heart to the passion of love. If you think your future conduct will entitle you to her esteem, you may feel assured she will not withhold from you her affections; but if your conscience cannot, in the presence of the ALMIGHTY, answer that you are worthy of her, leave us at once to his mercy, which will continue to guard

and bless my children, as he has ever done?"

"I merely tell you the words she uttered, Belnard; for to do justice to her manner would be impossible. I felt, indeed, that all my hope of happiness I was receiving from her, and gloried in claiming by the most solemn engagement, the hand of a woman who appeared friendless, unallied, and forlorn!"

"You are then married," quickly interrupted Belnard.

"No;—not yet; but in the presence of her mother she sacredly pledged me her hand, and the fervent blessing of a parent was equally bestowed on us both."

The scene that followed this was terrifying; Mrs. Vere was thrown into convulsion fits by the agitation, and we believed her expiring; but she gradually became better, and at length composed."

From this period Olivia's manner entirely changed; hitherto she had appeared frequently constrained, and even cold when addressing me on any subject but that of gratitude; but now she became studiously attentive. She seemed to keep a guard on her words and actions, that she might in every instance please, and her manner was now not only familiar but affectionate. This alteration gave me reason to hope that I had obtained her heart, and I ventured to press for our marriage; but she steadily refused, till her mother's health should be

established, of which we now began to entertain some expectations, as she daily appeared recovering. Still, however, she refused the advice of any but a London physician, and when she thought herself able to remove, I was commissioned to go up to London and prepare for their arrival. This I accordingly did. I hired a small ready furnished house, and engaged the necessary attendants, to whom I have left the charge of airing it for the new inhabitants; and I cannot help flattering myself that there is nothing wanting to complete my happiness, but your approbation."

"It is unnecessary," returned Belnard, in a low voice.

"Nay; now you are angry with me,



my dear friend, but wait till you see Olivia; condemn me not till then. I confess, indeed, that appearances may lead you to accuse me of the old fault, *unthinking precipitation*; and when I found leisure to reflect a little on what I had done, I felt conscious that I deserved your censure: I recollected all your kind friendship and interest in my welfare, and my father's last address to you; this awoke me from my dream; I knew all you might, and probably would say to me, on the absurdity, and even madness, of marrying a woman with whose character, fortune, connections, and name, I am unacquainted, and I resolved not to see her again, till I informed you of the whole affair, and prevailed on you to accompany me to receive ocular proof that the eye may sometimes direct reason

and understanding to the sure attainment of happiness. I must hope that you will not think I have acted unpardonably."

"It is impossible," said Colonel Bernard, after a considerable pause; "it is impossible, Waltheim, for me to give you my opinion without reflection. The subject shall receive from me the consideration I feel it merits, and when I have formed my own decision, you shall be made acquainted with it. In the mean time I request you may observe the most inviolable silence on this subject; my sister, though she jested on it this morning, little imagined it was a matter of such importance to you and to—others, and it ought to be treated with respect and circumspection; leave me now to pursue my walk.—I will meet you at dinner."

Waltheim willingly obeyed, and sauntered about the grounds till the dinner hour, when he again met his friend. There was in the manner and countenance of Colonel Belhard a solemnity that excited in his family equal surprise and concern; but Waltheim discovered in it no mixture of displeasure, and concluding that the dreaded reflections had turned out in his favour, he suffered his spirits to return to their usual buoyancy, while those of his friend continued evidently depressed.

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## CHAP. VI.

## ADVICE TO A LOVER.

THE following morning Colonel Bernard was the first who entered the breakfast room, and the eyes of all, though from different motives, were anxiously turned on him; but their apprehensions were quickly at an end; he had regained his cheerfulness, and that of his companions immediately returned to the usual tone.

When breakfast concluded, he proposed to Waltheim a walk, and the invitation

was eagerly accepted. The two friends proceeded in silence down the avenue, and struck into a wood which skirted the foot of the lawn, where Belnard abated his pace, and turned suddenly to his companion.

“I suppose,” said he, “you half-guess already, that I intend you a lecture?”

“I confess I did half-guess it; but the tone of your voice assures me that it will not be very severe. I am willing, however, to prove my submission, by receiving your admonitions with proper humility, provided you promise a total oblivion of all my past follies, and a continuance of your friendship.”

“You know,” returned the Colonel,

“ I am not apt to *remind*; to forget, must only depend on yourself; but it is my real and serious opinion, that my friendship and advice is no longer essential to you. Do not mistake me,” he continued, smiling; “ I only resign all my right and title of admonishing you, as heretofore, into the hands of much more absolute authority.—Olivia is so capable of acting the female Mentor to the wisest of us, that I should think myself in error, when my opinion varied from her’s.”

Waltheim looked amazed.

“ It is true,” resumed Belnard. “ I have already seen Olivia, and in circumstances which called forth powers of mind which I little imagined was ever possessed

by her sex, and very rarely by our's. Far from condemning your choice, I consider you as peculiarly favoured by heaven in the election; and if you obtain her affections, you may well be considered an object of envy.

The Colonel then proceeded to relate to his astonished companion the occurrence through which he had obtained the interview with Olivia, carefully suppressing, however, the extorted discovery of the wound, which he knew Waltheim too well to entrust to his knowledge; but he described the scene he had witnessed in terms which, in any other lover, might have excited very different feelings. Waltheim's surprise was succeeded by the most poignant grief for the death of Mrs. Vere, whose memory he blessed in re-

peated exclamations ; and this, at length, gave way to the most rapturous gratitude, for the warm approbation with which his friend had sanctioned his choice.

Belnard could not, for a considerable time, stop the torrent of rhapsody, but on the first interval he resumed.

“ You, yesterday, hoped that I would not pronounce you unpardonable; but, in one instance, you are decidedly so. You have confided this affair to Dimple, a man who I have often suggested to you is not fit to be trusted as a friend, or even to be associated with as an acquaintance. His manners are studiously conciliating, but I am very much deceived, if, under the mask of affected complacency, he does not conceal a narrow and a corrupt



mind. He is abandoned to dissipation, which he indulges by means degrading to a gentleman; and with the air of polite ease, he is prying, inquisitive, and most premeditatedly impudent; yet, to such a man, did you confide the story of Olivia, when, to such a man you ought not to have pronounced her name."

"Dear Belnard; can such be his character?"

"I before told you that I think it is; but be that as it may, you were inexcusable. No man, who knows the respect that is due to a woman of delicacy, will suffer her to be spoken of with freedom by men of free character. It is an insult committed against her more by himself than by any other person, and

should Olivia ever hear of your having done so, it will certainly sink you in her opinion. The truth is, Waltheim, that in as much as a woman of vice cannot be too much detested, a woman of virtue cannot be too much prized. She carries a ray of glory round her brow, which illumines every object that surrounds her, and renders her sacred from profanation: the purity of her mind pervades in her actions, irradiates her eyes, breathes through her lips, and even influences her clothing. She is not only elegant without, but elegant within; and no man, however abandoned in his own principles, can approach her without a warning sense of his own depravity, and an involuntary tribute to her superiority."

"O, Belnard!" exclaimed Waltheim; "how exactly have you described Olivia!"

“ I have described the image of perfection, which my own fancy has drawn even from my boyish days. It is said, that men of the military profession are free thinkers with respect to women, and, considering them as objects of prize and plunder, attack them by stratagem or force, as we do the enemy's fortifications, and with the same certainty of success: with many, very many of the sex, this plan of conduct may be well founded; and we are so circumstanced in the common mode of life, that our intercourse is too much with a species of beings who are levelled below the class of humanity, and are not only treated, but thought of as belonging only to the animal creation: but the more we see disgusting in them, the more we know of that infamy and degradation, which, though seldom avoid-

ed must be abhorred; so much the more do we reverence and adore the sacred presence of innocence and modesty! Believe me, my friend, he who devotes himself to the one is unworthy the other. Wisdom and virtue cannot assimilate with folly and vice; pursue the first, and avoid the last, that you may merit the lot you have chosen;—deserve Olivia, and---be happy!”

He then turned away and took a path which led direct to the house, leaving his companion in a tumult of surprise, pleasure, and exultation, at the approbation so unequivocally bestowed on the very conduct he feared would have incurred his censure, or entirely deprived him of his esteem. Waltheim pursued his walk, musing on this unexpected circumstance,

and meditating on plans for the future, in all the enthusiasm of hope which *youthful poets fancy when they love*; but suddenly recollecting that these hopes could not too soon be realized, and perceiving that nothing now prevented the prosecution of his suit with Olivia, he determined directly to leave Belvale for the purpose. The distance to Estlake Lodge was less than seventy miles; by setting out instantly he must be there before night, and even in time to have a conversation with her on the important subject; to-morrow the whole business could easily be arranged, and the day appointed which was to seal his bliss.

The suggestions of Waltheim's imagination were generally adopted on the instant, and though seldom persevered in,

no person, however prejudiced, could accuse him of procrastination. He struck across the lawn, and flew like feathered Mercury in pursuit of his friend; he burst open the parlour door, and finding only Constance, demanded if she could tell what was become of her brother?

She answered, "yes."

"Where is he?"

"In his apartment.—Hoe—he desired not to be disturbed."

"But I want to speak to him;—very much."

"That may be true; but it is also

true that you cannot speak to him till dinner."

"Pooh!—I want to go to Estlake Lodge to dinner."

"You may go to Jerusalem, if you please," returned Constance, very calmly; "but you must first sit down here, and hold this skein of silk on your hands till I wind it off: Come, hold it so,—that is the way;—now tell me what you want with Charles?"

"I want to ask him if I ought not to leave this directly."

"He will answer—no."

"Why do you think so?"

“Because we dine to-morrow with the little French marquis, and his little French wife; and you are invited.”

“But why should I go there? I don’t speak French.”

“Don’t you? then I must give you a little very wholesome advice.”

“What is that?”

“Never again venture into genteel company; for in spite of your square shoulders, your circular head, and triangular nose, you are no fit companion for gentlemen and ladies.”

“Upon my soul,” cried Waltheim,



nettled, "you treat me with very little ceremony."

"So will every body, till you speak French:—but what will take you to Estlake Lodge?"

"A chaise."

"Thank you," returned Constance: "that is so good that I will memorandum it down, and retail it as my own. So—now you may go."

"What shall I do," exclaimed Waltheim, "to see your brother?"

"Fidget and fret till dinner time; it will amuse you."

Waltham literally obeyed: his fear of offending protracted his intended journey, and by the time dinner was announced it appeared to him very probable that he could not contrive to leave Belvale for another week. His mind, therefore, became settled for the delay, and he did not mention the subject; but Constance supposing it had been already discussed, asked him if he had got leave from his keeper to range so far away?

“I have not asked it,” he replied.

Constance instantly made the application, and in terms altogether her own.

“He is in the right,” answered her

brother; "and as I supposed he had that intention, I have written such a letter to Doctor Estlake as will insure him a kind reception."

"Constance laughingly asked if he was going to school?

"Yes;" replied the Colonel, seriously; "at least he will obtain the benefit of instructions which the wisest philosopher might adopt without a blush. Come, Waltheim,—I will give your toast."

Belnard filled his glass with an unsteady hand, and sent round the wine: the hint was quickly obeyed, and when all were prepared, he arose from his chair, and with emphasis, pronounced the name of---OLIVIA!"

It was pledged with some curiosity, and by Waltheim with much confusion; but Colonel Belnard left the room, and beckoned him to follow.

“Here, my friend,” said he, “is the letter to the Doctor; I am sorry it is necessary, but his prejudice against you it is now more than ever in your power to overcome. He is so much interested in the happiness of his new wards, that through them you may secure his esteem: dear Waltheim, do not neglect it, for the sake of—her—who ought to guide your conduct in every instance!”

“Ah, Charles!” cried Waltheim, “how shall I convince you of my gratitude?”

“By implicity following the directions

I this day gave you. I feel, indeed, that on your future happiness much of mine will depend."

"Generous,---kind, Belnard!"

The Colonel hastily turned from him and demanded when he thought of beginning his journey.

"Instantly; or perhaps to-morrow:—when you please."

"Then to-night, my friend," he answered.—"I think I shall—be glad when you are gone."

Waltheim eagerly caught at the permission, and in half an hour left Belvare

## CHAP. VII.

## DANGEROUS EXPERIMENT.



THE inhabitants of Belvale never had more reason to rejoice, in the presence of a son and a brother than in the period succeeding Walthem's departure. Charles was all vivacity, and far from indulging himself in occasional seclusions, he never even strolled about the grounds without being accompanied by his sister: he took an active part in all his father's employment, and an interest in every little occurrence which had hitherto escaped his notice. Mr. Bel-

nard, with some surprise, remarked  
change.

“My dear Sir,” he replied, “can you wonder that I am weary of being inactive? my regiment is expected over next season, or I would certainly give up my leave of absence, and join it abroad.”

“God forbid!” answered his father; “your mother could not survive her apprehensions if you again visited those fatal climates. But we will not think of it; you are now stationary at least in England.”

Charles willingly dropped the subject, and suffered none to obtrude that could damp the general gaiety.---He formed parties of pleasure, and was himself the

spring which gave animation to their society.

But these pleasures were not destined long to continue: a fortnight after Waltheim had left Belvale a letter was given into the hand of the Colonel, who instantly recognized the address to be in the writing of Doctor Estlake, and hastily left the room to peruse as follows.

“I have experienced a severe disappointment, my dear boy, but must only advert to my old maxim, that every thing will happen for the best; I, however, think myself justified in breaking my resolution and requesting immediately to see you.”

“Your apartment is already appropriated to another guest; but I have taken lodgings for you in the house with Waltheim, and shall expect you to-morrow evening: so determined am I, my dear Charles, against a disappointment, that I send my own chaise to insure your compliance.



“Remember me in the most affectionate terms to my old friends: they may safely entrust you to me; for well do they know that my own happiness is not so dear to me as your’s.

“Believe me, my-son, ever, ever, your watchful father and friend.

“R. ESTLAKE.”

On enquiry, Belnard was informed, that James, the Doctor’s coachman, was the bearer of this letter, and from him he immediately learned, that his old master had been so fretful and impatient since he went home, that Mrs. Crank entreated the Colonel might make no delay. With mixed pain and pleasure he involuntarily yielded to the united request, and the Doctor’s letter explained to his family the cause of his sudden resolution to leave them.

At a very early hour, the next morning, he accordingly set out from Belvale, and his reflections were too busily employed to permit his partaking the regret his departure occasioned. He had indeed much to think of, and much to conjecture: the cause of the summons he could not account for, but even against his most determined principles some starting hopes arose. When first informed by Waltheim of Olivia's election, he had also learned that she gave her hand in compliance with her mother's entreaties; and though assured by the fortunate lover, that her heart had followed the gift, he yet could not forbear to entertain some doubts that it had been irrecoverably bestowed. Waltheim's inconsistency of conduct might possibly urge her to retract a promise given in

compulsion; and now that the presence of her mother could no longer influence her to persevere in the sacrifice, she might, perhaps, hesitate in the performance of it.

On retracing every circumstance he became more convinced in this belief; and a few reflections easily persuaded him to be reconciled to the event, whatever that might be. If the mind of Olivia was capable of a perfect union with that of Waltheim, she could not be the character her first appearance indicated; and on this proof he resolved to rest his judgment of her merits. "If she loves Waltheim," said he, "she is incapable of the solid attachment I wish to inspire, and which I am myself capable of feeling. If his society gratifies her understanding,

"I may, without boasting, acknowledge, that she cannot estimate mine; and to mere personal attractions I will never surrender the affections of my future life. The companion in sickness and in health, in youth and age, must possess merits that will endear her to me in every situation: if Olivia can receive happiness in Waltheim's attachment, I can have nothing to regret in being prevented offering her mine."

On these doubts hung all his resolutions, and the nearer he approached the habitation of his old friend, the more frequently he called upon himself to be firm.

Estlake Lodge was situated on a gentle declivity, near the town of Windsor,

and commanding on all sides a rich and extensive prospect. The Doctor's fortune was now above mediocrity, but his affection for his only sister, and her daughter, who depended solely on him for present and future provision, and some considerations respecting the son of his adoption, Charles Belnard, had induced him to limit his household establishment to a certain proportion of his yearly income. The public duties of his profession he had given into other hands, and now passed his time in the retreat of his study; but his sister and niece he indulged in such society as the place afforded, nor ever passed a censure on the moderate enjoyment of those amusements in which he himself declined a share. To Mrs. Crank's friends he always behaved with the politeness natural

to his disposition and education, and in every instance treated her and Sophia with the kindest attention and forbearance of those little foibles originating more in the trifling pursuits of their sex than in any wilful intent to contradict his inclinations. They often, indeed, complained that his house was too small, and his furniture old fashioned; but he neither enlarged the one, or changed the other; and when the topic was started, he was always certain of a refuge among his books.

Not that Mrs. Crank disliked books; on the contrary she was well read; but she preferred giving her occasional remarks to a surrounding auditory, and while she sometimes explained a very striking passage, in a very striking tone,

her daughter's attention was profoundly engaged on the formation of a——new sleeve.

Mrs. Crank was romantic to a degree, and she had once been so very romantic as to indulge the pleasing contemplation of uniting her daughter to her brother's favourite pupil. This plan the old gentleman discovered, and at once annihilated, by declaring, that if she put such nonsense into Sophia's head, he would send both mother and daughter to reside by themselves on a stipulated allowance. She denied the charge, and from that time took every opportunity to expatiate on the young Colonel's great friendship and regard for them, and their great friendship and regard for the young Colonel.

Belnard arrived in Windsor about the Doctor's usual dinner hour; but stopped at a hotel to change his dress. He then walked up to the Lodge, and being informed that the family had already sat down to table, he proceeded to the parlour without being announced. His sensations were indescribable, but a servant threw open the door, and he found himself again in the presence of Olivia.

The slight bustle occasioned by his sudden appearance soon subsided, and when he had taken his seat, each expressed their joy at seeing him. The Doctor's was so tumultuous that he could with difficulty articulate: Mrs. Crank and her daughter were elaborate: Waltheim talked so much that he appeared to forget other people had any thing to



say : Marcella caught his hand with both her's ; and Olivia's eyes sparkled a salute of the warmest pleasure at again beholding her champion.

“ My dear boy,” cried the Doctor, in emotion, “ how happy am I to see you! —all must go right now.”

Belnard found himself seated between his old friend and Miss Crank, and felt a relief in being able to address the latter. He could not command himself sufficiently to join in the general conversation, and his embarrassment was even painful: Sophia, however, exerted her talents to engage him, and he was entirely disposed that her efforts should succeed ; but in defiance of his own exertions and those of his companion, his

attention flew to other objects. Waltheim sat exactly opposite, and beside Olivia: he whispered her continually, though her answers were always aloud, and perfectly composed; but she devoted to him distinguished attention, and listened with an air of approbation to every sentence her lover uttered. Marcella was quite silent, and as her place was at the other side of Sophia, Belnard had no opportunity of observing her.

At length the tedious interval of dinner elapsed; the ladies retired, but Waltheim still remained. It was however but for a few minutes; his sentences were evidently short and constrained, and as soon as he could well get away, he followed the female party to the drawing-room.

“What a puppy is that!” exclaimed the Doctor, as he shut the door: “I have no patience with him, or with you.”

“With me?”

“Yes; why, Charles, did you send him here? nothing but the most romantic nonsense can justify you for making so many people miserable.”

“Many, do you say? one only:”—he stopped in confusion.—

“Ah, Charles!” said the Doctor, shaking his head, “more than one suffers, I fear: Olivia is unhappy in her choice: believe me, Waltheim’s merits must rise much higher, or her intellectual

perfections must be terribly degraded, before they can unite, in *sentiment* at least."

"But—if she thinks otherwise?"

"If?—no, no;—it can never be a match."

Belnard started!

"Never!" repeated the Doctor, impatiently: "a fribble! a fop! a coxcomb!—all froth and bubble!—a creature who turns the noblest gifts of nature to the weaknesses of folly!"

"His present attachment is an instance to the contrary."

“ You mistake, Charles,” cried the Doctor: “ it is one of the strongest instances you can deduce. He does not love Olivia! I repeat it—his vanity is gratified by her avowal in his favour; he has just sense enough to see that she is superior to every other woman, and triumphs in the idea that she is to belong to him; but had she betrayed to him the extent of her understanding, the deficiencies of his own must have taken the alarm; and, in gradually receding from an investigation, so much to his prejudice, he would have gradually discovered, that that which constitutes happiness to him can never ensure even tranquillity for her.”

“ O, Sir !—you deceive yourself?”

“Trust me, I do not. From the first I studied her character, and yet, more attentively since, I found out that Waltheim was the bar to any other engagement. In her I have discovered an union of perfections exactly opposite: she is elegant and simple; refined and natural; serene and animated; reserved and candid; firm and gentle; dignified and familiar. She possesses beauty without vanity, and consequence without presumption. Is it possible then that such a woman can love Waltheim? a man possessing only a few naturally good dispositions, and no bad ones. I will add, is it possible that he can love her without understanding to value her merits? he beholds her a beautiful picture;—she pleases his eye;—he hears the sound of her voice;—’tis music to his

ear: when she is present he sees only her, because her external graces gratify his taste: let her withdraw herself from him for ever—he will love another object with equal vehemence:—if she marries him, she will despise him without complaining of her fate; but he will expect the enthusiasm of passionate love, and in his disappointment will too late discover that he has made her miserable, and can never himself be happy.”

“ I cannot, Sir; I ought not to listen.”

“ My dear boy,” said the Doctor, “ you ought not to have sent Waltheim here; he would have forgotten her, and there the matter might rest, to leave opportunity for new events. I think you

have committed a very serious—weakness—to call it no worse; in not persuading him against so wild a scheme.”

“Good God!” exclaimed Belnard; “do you not know that he saved her life? that he was already engaged to her?”

“I know;—I know all that,” answered the Doctor; “Olivia has taken great pains to inform me of her obligations; and she is so anxious to continually remember them herself that I can have no doubt it is only through this medium she can prevail on herself to tolerate him.”

“Why?—Why? my dear, and respected friend,” cried Belnard, in much emotion;



“why did you send for me to speak on this subject?”

“Because I want to enable you to make your own observations. When this match is broken off—”

Belnard started in displeasure!

“Not by you,” rejoined the Doctor. “I formed your mind, and instructed you in the principles of moral and religious rectitude;—to degrade you I would not pursue the most brilliant hopes of happiness; but Waltheim will fix his own destiny; leave the matter to him, and all will do well.”

“On such terms,” replied Belnard,

“ in such expectations it would be infamous in me to remain here.”

“ I give you only the advantages and opportunities I have already given him;” pursued the Doctor: “ you are no more my inmate than he is; but I will press this subject no farther: I will not even mention it again, if you give me one promise; and that I feel I have a right to insist on.”

“ Surely, Sir;” replied the Colonel; “ you may believe my implicit compliance.”

“ Remain with me one month.”

“ Is it not a dangerous experiment, Sir?—I acknowledge to you my peace

has already suffered: I am not a romancer; but the peculiar situation of Miss Vere, when I first saw her, and the peculiarity of her character, was in every instance formed to make a lasting impression."

"I think so," answered Doctor Estlake; "and it is for this reason I exact the performance of my requisition. I ask no more than that this chain of incidents may take its course; Providence directs all things for the best; but when such a gem is thrown in your way, I deem you more atheist than philosopher to spurn the path that may lead you to the ultimate possession."

"Surely this is contrary to your own doctrine?"

“ With principles less firm than yours, it would be so ; I should in any other fear a dishonourable advantage might be taken ; but with you I am secure against it. The only danger is in the loss of your peace of mind, and in risking that you may be well assured I risque my own : yet, Charles, I incur the danger, and trust in God for the issue. Be firm, my dear boy ; our fate is not in our own hands.”

The good old gentleman then told him that when he found himself tired of being alone, he would find the ladies in the drawing-room, or him in his study ; and pressing his hand in fatherly affection ; left the room.

The most painful emotions filled the

breast of Belnard on a retrospect of this conversation. The impatient temper of his old friend had, in one hour, undone all the resolutions of the last fortnight; he saw himself now surrounded with dangers, and no hand to assist in his escape. Till now he knew not the impression the first sight of Olivia had made on his heart, and the necessity of guarding it with the utmost vigilance flashed upon his conviction. He severely deplored the error of affection which had plunged him into this difficulty and danger; and since he could not fly, he resolved to evade it.

Belnard was early accustomed to overcome his passions, and keep his inclinations subservient to his judgment: the more deeply he felt the power of Olivia's

excellence, the more vigorous he knew must be the effort to persevere in the path of honor, and he resolved not only to recover his tranquillity, but to prevent all suspicions that it had ever been disturbed. “Waltheim,” said he, “deserves her hand, and her obligations to him she will not return with ingratitude: let me then, instead of envying his felicity; let me rather urge him to merit the distinction he has already obtained.”

The integrity of these reflections helped to restore his composure, and enabled him to join the party in the drawing-room, where the sprightly good-humour of Sophia assisted him to support the struggle of his spirits. Towards Olivia he did not once dare to glance his eyes;

but he frequently remarked that her sister regarded him with looks of the most piercing penetration, and gave to the conversation he held with his lively companion a serious attention, that surprised and half confounded him.

In truth, the heart of Sophia bounded with the hope of this long wished-for conquest. To obtain the undivided assiduities of Colonel Belnard, in presence of two women whom she involuntarily confessed to be much superior, excited an exultation that was displayed in every action, and her fancy revelled in the triumphs of vanity; but Belnard had long before examined her character, and though he admired the animation of a pretty face, and the gaiety of youth, health, and a strong flow of animal

spirits, he soon discovered that her mind was destitute of those graces which he deemed essential to the female character; and her conduct, though in itself irreproachable, was more the effect of dispositions naturally virtuous than of principles firmly inculcated. Her follies were generally the result of a lively temper, and an open heart, but still they were follies which often amounted to levities; and in the moment the native cheerfulness of her manner excited most interest in his affections, her intrinsic merits lost their value in his esteem.

The presence of Olivia, far from contributing to obliterate this opinion, rather heightened the glare of Sophia's failings, by starting comparisons in the mind of Belnard, as advantageous to the one, as



prejudicial to the other; but against these comparisons he anxiously guarded. He endeavoured to hear only Sophia; and a common observer might justly conclude that all his powers of attention were devoted to the one object; but the restraint was almost intolerable, and he joyfully hailed the hour which permitted him to retire to his lodgings, and indulge his uninterrupted reflections on what had passed. Waltheim, as he expected, was his companion; but Belnard complained of fatigue, and by declining the conversation which was eagerly entered upon, he succeeded in his wishes of separating for the night.

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## CHAP. VIII.

## UNCERTAINTY.



IT had been particularly specified that Colonel Belnard and Waltheim were to spend the entire of every day at the lodge, and the former accordingly prepared himself for breakfasting there; but finding the latter had indolently forgotten the passing time, and delayed rising till the appointed hour had actually arrived, he sent an apology for both. Waltheim hurried himself, and was almost stunned with confusion and mortification, on finding his friend already seated at the

breakfast table in their own drawing-room, and on hearing the cause of it; but Belnard made no remarks, and the delinquent felt too much humbled to offer an excuse. He partook of the repast in evident constraint, and the moment it was over arose, as if released from some painful confinement.

The Colonel now proposed fulfilling their appointment, and Waltheim could only assent:—they proceeded up the town, and had nearly reached the gate when they beheld Mrs. and Miss Cran issue from it, and accompanied (to their great amazement of Belnard) by—Dimple. The Colonel looked astonished, and Waltheim excessively confused; but there was no receding: both parties met, and the usual salutes of the morning were

offered and received. Had Dimple, however, been easily intimidated, the look which accompanied the bow yielded to him by Colonel Belnard, might have checked his presumption, or disturbed his composure; but he had established it as a convenient maxim, that to *feel* was inconsistent with good breeding, and Mr. Dimple accordingly became invulnerable.

This meeting was exactly what Sophia wished; it was besides a reinforcement beaux, a circumstance in itself sufficient to excite rejoicing; but she was extremely disappointed that the Colonel refused her invitation to attend them in their morning visits, though she offered him the inducement of an introduction to some new and elegant acquaintance: he was inflexible.

“ Shall you have any objection, my dear Colonel,” asked the lisping Dimple, “ to permit Waltheim deserting you this morning for a few hours ? ”

“ Certainly not, Sir,” he replied.

Waltheim stood irresolute, but Sophia piqued at Belnard's indifference, took his hesitating companion by one arm while Dimple seized the other, and they led him away, unresisting.

“ Will Olivia become the wife of this *child* ? ” mentally, repeated Belnard, as he gazed after them ; “ how is she deceived in his character, or I in her's, if she can love him ? ”

On reaching the Lodge, he, without enquiring for the ladies, went directly to the study, where he found his good old friend busily employed over some new publications he had that morning received from London: unwilling to interrupt him, or be interrupted himself, he selected one, and eager to escape a renewal of the conversation of yesterday, he stepped from the window into the garden, and while he leisurely turned over the leaves of the book, he sauntered towards a dark path which led to the back of the arbour, and was completely shaded from the sun by the spreading foliage of the bright green larch, and luxuriant laurel. He walked forward, and had nearly reached the spot he deemed almost sacred to himself, when the sound of footsteps caused him to raise his eyes, and he beheld the very

persons he was most anxious to avoid. They approached him with evident pleasure, and having paid their compliments, were passing on, when, in a tone expressive of disappointment, he hastily apologized for his intrusion, and requested that he only might retire.

Olivia answered, that they had been walking some time, and were in that moment returning to the house; but Marcella stood in suspense, and her countenance expressed much meaning.

“What would Miss Marcella say?” said Belnard.

“That if you invite me to walk with you,” she very frankly replied, “I will give you my company a little while.”

“What honor you do me!” he exclaimed, in a voice of delight: “may I be permitted to extend the petition to your sister?”

Olivia, with an air of familiar politeness, declined, and pursued her way to the house; but Marcella returned with Belnard into the path they had just quitted.

“Do not think hardly of me,” said she, laughing, “for making the first advances to an acquaintance, but for the life of me I cannot resist an inclination to give you my regard, and expect your’s in return, though perhaps my expedient to obtain it, is precisely that which will deprive me of it.”



"Allow me rather to say," he warmly replied, "that you flatter not only my vanity, but my heart. I fully understand the value of your esteem, and in presuming to offer mine, I can never deviate the boundaries of respect, which my sense of your confidence inspires."

Marcella turned upon him a penetrating glance.

"Do you doubt my sincerity?" said he.

"No," she replied; "but I am surprised that you should so exactly comprehend my meaning, and thus banish all fears of having my motives mistaken: I will also add, that I am delighted

beyond expression, that my opinion of you is realized." "Why are you so astonished," she sportively rejoined, "that I should think highly of you? first impressions are not easily given up, and notwithstanding you played truant to your character last night, I was not so rash as to condemn you to the common level."

"You are either very sarcastic," he returned, "or very flattering."

"Neither, upon my honor! Olivia can tell you I am a singular creature, but with respect to you we think alike; she is, however, so situated, that she can *never* speak her mind; and I so disposed, that I can never conceal mine."

Belnard eagerly caught at the first part of this sentence, and was about to repeat the words to obtain an explanation, but he recollected himself, and remained silent.

“And so ;” resumed Marcella ; though you did play truant to your character last night, I had sufficient discernment to observe that——.”

“Why do you hesitate?” said he.

“To save myself,” she replied ; “if I should be mistaken. When I know you better I will speak to you more freely.”

“Pray!” cried Belnard, detaining her ; “do not leave me !—you had just given

me all the happiness I am now capable of tasting."

"What is that?" she laughingly demanded.

"That of believing myself held in estimation by two persons, who, from the moment I first beheld them, are indelibly engraven on my memory."

"You mean my sister and me?" cried Marcella.

"Permit me to say, both;—and that, however circumstances may apparently lead me to act *truant to my character*, it was the wish to avoid a great error that led me into a small one."

“I am glad of it,” she replied, “with all my heart and soul!——but if I stay with you one moment longer I shall certainly forget that I have seen you but twice, and fancy you my confidential friend or—brother:” she snatched her hand away, and kissing it to him with an air of sportive freedom ran down the walk, leaving him a statue of astonishment, doubt, apprehension, and delight. He could hardly believe what he had heard, or believing it, dared not to dwell on the words, or the manner in which they were uttered: yet that Marcella had a particular meaning he could not doubt, and he retraced the conversation with a memory faithful to its trust.

Marcella was not more than eighteen, and possessed all the attractions of beauty,

and all the elegance of distinguished rank. She had spoken with a degree of freedom he had never before believed compatible with female delicacy; and yet such was her native propriety, that she deeply impressed the respect which she evidently considered as belonging to her: There was perhaps much of hauteur in her manner, but it was not unpleasing, and if she was singular, as she asserted herself to be, it also appeared that she was privileged to be so: He had remarked her silence of the evening before, but it was the silence of observation; and though she was accurately polite to Mrs. and Miss Crank, and even ceremonious to Waltheim, there was an air of condescension in her countenance and expressions, which Belnard understood in a very different sense from that which they

attached to it: they saw only the most affable attentions; he perceived something of contempt.

But to him she assumed a different appearance; her features expressed vivacity and sweetness, innocence and archness; every word was uttered with meaning, every look conveyed the most playful intelligence; and, on recollecting each incident, he plainly discovered that she had not only read his heart but approved its emotions.

But passion did not yet so far blind his judgement as to conceal from him that she had committed an error in this avowal of her sentiments: he regretted it for her sake, and for his own, and felt hurt that she had condescended so far,

though it had been only to him. He hoped too that Olivia had not authorized this half explanation, and started as the suspicion crossed his fancy; but though he dismissed it with displeasure against himself, it awakened his caution, and he resolved to be guarded in every look, word, and action, and conceal even from Marcella the real state of his inclinations.

This suspicion, in truth, operated more to restore his composure than all that philosophy could dictate: he now felt master of himself, and no longer feared to encounter the presence of Olivia: his emotions ceased; and his vivacity returned.

He joined the Doctor in the study,



and remained with him till they were summoned to dinner : he then met Olivia with more curiosity than agitation, and Marcella with the most easy freedom :— he took his place between her and Sophia, and in the general attentions and general conversation, was again all Colonel Belnard.

Waltheim had returned with the ladies, and occupied his usual seat beside Olivia ; but he addressed her less frequently and with much constraint : she appeared surprised and hurt at this change in his manner ; and though her's to him was still the same, she was evidently far from indifferent to the alteration ; a blush of shame for him often crossed her cheek, yet her address was even affectionate, her voice more touchingly sweet, and her eyes

turned on him with an unusual expression of tenderness. Belnard beheld her with new wonder! all his doubts vanished, his heart again sunk within him, and in the conviction that her's was indeed given to Waltheim, he experienced sensations intolerably acute.

But there was also another subject of astonishment; the conversation of Mrs. and Miss Crank informed him, that amongst other visits of the morning, they had called on Lady Senegal, who, with her sisters, was come to Windsor to pass a few weeks. Mr. Dimple was of her party, and they had all agreed to meet at the German play that evening, and afterwards were to sup with her Ladyship.

Belnard enquired if Waltheim was included in this engagement, and observed that Olivia coloured deeply on hearing that he was; Sophia, who answered the question, added that he also was expected to join them.

“I consider myself engaged to Doctor Estlake,” he replied.

“Lord!” cried Sophia, “that is so ceremonious; we wanted Miss Vere and her sister to go, but she made just the same excuse.”

The Colonel felt pleased at this trifling coincidence of opinion, and suffered his displeasure against Waltheim to die away: but the Doctor spoke of the arrangement not only with approbation but with sa-

tisfaction; and Mrs. Crank, in this unexpected concession on his part, was rejoiced in explaining the cause of this sudden intimacy. "Lady Senegal," she said, "had once met Sophia at Tunbridge Wells, and took such a fancy to her that she had ever since wished for an opportunity of making an acquaintance; so, in the absence of Sir Sentiment, having nothing to keep her at home, she and her sisters resolved to come to Windsor, and the very morning after their arrival, she very politely sent Mr. Dimple with a message expressive of her wishes for a meeting."

Belnard at a glance saw through the whole proceeding; and the spring which actuated all these motions. Dimple, he perceived, had been the cause of Miss

Vere's flight from Southampton, and the incident had increased the curiosity of Lady Senegal to learn something more of the strangers. He also saw Waltheim's uneasiness in his consciousness of the great error he had committed in entrusting the secret to such hands, and at once pitied and condemned the giddy weakness which prompted him to a confidence he had now so much serious reason to repent. His manner to Olivia betrayed his fears of encountering an explanation, and it was evidently these fears that urged him to persevere in his folly by withdrawing from her presence.

Poor Waltheim, in reality, looked much relieved when reminded by Mrs. Crank that they had no time to lose: he offered an unconnected apology to Olivia,

which she accepted with the kindest forbearance of reproach, and departed with his elated companions for their evening's amusement.

This was, to Doctor Estlake, a moment of triumph, which Belnard knew too well how to explain. The good old gentleman asked permission of the ladies to join them at tea, and laughed and rallied with the utmost gaiety. Olivia's equanimity had not deserted her, but she appeared to force herself into conversation, and the Colonel ventured to remark it to her sister.

"Yes;" replied Marcella; "her promise is given, and the follies which in any other would excite her contempt, in Mr. Walthem she deeply regrets."

“Good God!” exclaimed Belnard;  
“has she avowed this?”

“O, no!” returned Marcella; “believe me not even to herself,—if possible.”

“I think,” said Olivia, as she earnestly observed them; “I think, Sir, my sister has enlisted the Colonel in the very limited number of her favourites?”

“True,” cried Marcella,—“I have no;—excepting Doctor Estlake there is not a man in England I like half so well.”

“And you have no objection to have his partiality publicly known?”

“None in the world, Sir.”

“And do you think, my dear girl,” said the Doctor, “that every one will judge of you with the candor you merit?”

“O! as to that;” she replied, laughing; “Olivia has not yet persuaded me to her moderation or self-command: she can do as she pleases with her inclinations; mine do what they please with me.”

“Marcella is indebted to nature and a mother’s example for an almost faultless disposition,” said Olivia, “otherwise this confidence might be dangerous.”



“And to your example, dearest Olivia,” she affectionately replied; “If you knew her, Sir,” she added, addressing the Doctor, “your opinion of me would be raised in even the relation I bear to her.”

“We will drop the subject,” said Olivia, smiling; “your friends stare at your extravagant compliment.”

“And believe it less than just,” she answered.

Marcella's manner was calculated to impress the truth of all she uttered: it appeared as if she could not conceal or alter it from the simple matter of fact; and the persons to whom this last sentence was directed, admitted its full meaning without a question. The Doc-

tor glanced exultingly at Belnard, who turned from him in confusion, and felt the necessity of an effort to suppress the various and complicated emotions that throbbed in his breast.—Time passed so swiftly that the old gentleman's usual hour of retiring to rest was unnoticed by him; but Olivia reminded him of it, and notwithstanding his remonstrances to the contrary, she refused to contribute to the injury of his health by remaining longer in the drawing-room.

Belnard dreaded the Doctor's remarks too much to remain with him alone; and hastily followed the example of Olivia, by taking leave for the night.

“God bless you, my dear boy!” said the good old man; “we do right to trust

in Providence; *He directs all for the best.*"

The occurrences of this day had opened a large field for contemplation; and Belnard beheld in the unthinking folly of Waltheim a long perspective of most eventful terminations. Mrs. Crank and her daughter would, he well knew, quickly be informed of all that had been communicated to Dimple, and the whole circumstance must soon be discovered to Olivia; but at the suggestions of hope so founded, Belnard started! "Is this," he exclaimed, "my performance of the solemn promise a dying father obtained from me? If Olivia could read my thoughts, how would such a deviation from honor lower me in her esteem!" — "To that, at least," he added,

after a pause;—"to her approbation I will entitle myself; and is not the friendship of such a woman more estimable than the passionate attachment of all those whom I have hitherto considered as the ornament of their sex, and the admiration of ours."

These reflections determined him to intrude his advice once more on Waltheim, and warn him of the danger he incurred in a continued intimacy with Dimple, and by explaining to him the character of Lady Senegal, convince him of the necessity for avoiding her. In every pursuit of her life she was guided only by self-gratification; her curiosity was unequalled, except by her cunning, and as the suggestions of the first continually impelled her to the exercise of

the last, she had attained a degree of expertness in the various branches of intrigue which she contrived to render as useful to her purse as they were accordant to her inclinations. The duties of ostentation, Lady Senegal never neglected; to those of virtue she was wholly indifferent: penurious in the comforts of life, she was lavish in personal expense; and as her pride was ever subservient to her ambition, she frequently gratified the parade of both at the pecuniary loss of those she affected to despise. Vain of her large fortune, and a pretty, though diminutive figure, she vaunted of the one by a pretended display of poverty, and exhibited the other in all the embellishments of decoration, with the professed view of bringing out her sisters, for whose establishment she made the most

unwearied exertions: but as it was well known to those who knew her at all, that her heart was as incapable of attachment as her soul was contracted and selfish, her efforts, in favour of them, were considered as resulting from the regard she had for herself. In truth, no woman existing had a greater contempt for the weakness of humanity, the absurdity of female delicacy, the fallacy of religious or moral obligation, the affections of nature, or the refinements of friendship; but these follies were established in general society, and she considered herself as having a right to use them for individual benefit.

It was in obedience to this opinion that she had enlisted Dimple in her service. He was as a branch of osier, which can be

bent to every purpose, though in itself insignificant and valueless; but he flattered her and her sisters with the most contemptible adulation: to whatever assertion each advanced, he added a vehement affirmation, and though it consequently happened that he often swore to the truth of incidents exactly opposite, they adroitly contrived to save his veracity, by attributing his complaisance to mistake.

Belnard foresaw, that if such a woman obtained an ascendancy over Waltheim, his own influence must be lost; and he determined, without delay, to represent to him, in the most forcible colours, the precipice on which he stood.

## CHAP. IX.

## PERPLEXITIES.



TO accomplish this design; by securing a timely opportunity of conversing on the subject, Colonel Beluard had settled to breakfast at home, and invite Waltheim to a ride before they visited the Lodge; but on going to his room he found him not only risen, but learned that he had already gone out. Belnard felt much offended, and no longer hesitated to fulfil his own engagement; he walked up to his old friend's habitation, and on entering the parlour found Wal-



them seated, intently perusing a newspaper. A cool salute passed on either side, and the appearance of the ladies soon drew their attention to more general concerns.

But whatever had passed in the evening before he quickly discovered that the evil he intended to avert had already taken place: Waltheim's manner to Olivia was stiff, constrained, and absent, and the entire of his conversation and civilities, which he withdrew from her, he devoted to Sophia: This conduct was evidently premeditated, and also evidently for the purpose of exciting Olivia's jealousy; he talked in raptures of the Miss Cardinals; of their good-humour and affability, and of Lady Senegal's fashionable manners; and he declared

Dimple to be an excellent companion, and an extremely well-bred gentleman.

Olivia beheld and heard him with surprise ; but Belnard at once penetrated the source and object of this change. He saw that Sophia secretly aided Waltheim in supporting it, while at the same time she and her mother behaved with more than usual solicitude to please their stranger guests. That a discussion of the mystery attending them had last night taken place he no longer doubted, and the interference of Lady Senegal he easily traced : her insatiable curiosity was determined on wading through every obstacle, and by seducing the lover from all controul of his mistress, and his friend, she had established her own authority over his reason and principles. To turn the devoted Waltheim from the councils

of those who sincerely wished his welfare, it was only necessary to persuade him that they had a selfish interest in their advice: Olivia could easily be represented as a female adventurer, who had drawn him into a promise of marriage which he ought not to fulfil, without being informed of circumstances it concerned his future honor to know, and by alarming her fears of losing him the whole affair must of course be cleared up. To avert the influence of a friend was yet more easy; there are none so tenacious against being guided by others as those who feel conscious of being unable to guide themselves; and as Waltheim was exactly in this predicament, the arguments even of the feeble minded Dimple could accomplish this important undertaking.

But, with an alteration of circumstances so unexpected, the opinions of Colonel Belnard also changed. He doubted whether he ought to resist the natural course of events which tended to the separation of Walthelm and Olivia: the union, he felt well assured, could give happiness to neither, and, on cool deliberation, he resolved to avoid all interference with either party as if he was wholly uninterested in the event.

That he might be enabled to persevere in this design he secluded himself from all family society, passed the mornings walking or riding, and the evenings with the Doctor in his study, or not unfrequently in strolling through his favourite retirement in the garden; Mrs. Crank seized with avidity her brother's dispo-

sition to promote her intimacy with her new friends. To them she and Sophia devoted the hours till the approach of dinner, and this sacrifice of time was repaid, by her Ladyship's party honoring the hospitable board with their presence. The Doctor started no objection to this increase of family, his tacit acquiescence was therefore considered as an approbation, and this line of conduct pursued accordingly.

In the succeeding week Belnard had little opportunity for observation; he saw Olivia and Waltheim only during the times of repast, and endeavoured to see with indifference that she deeply regretted the increasing caprice of her lover. Her manner to him was that of a gentle and amiable wife, who truly laments the errors

of her husband, and hopes to bring him back to virtue, by winning kindness rather than open reproach; or did she once exert the ascendancy which her elevation of soul must have rendered irresistible in the contest.

In this period Lady Senegal's advice had not been neglected by her coadjutors: they observed the utmost caution in their conversation, and even in their looks, to prevent a suspicion occurring that they were informed of any circumstance respecting the strangers; and so guarded were they in this instance, that Belnard believed they continued to be successful with both the Doctor and his favourite young guests.

By stimulating the pride of Wal-

them, and soothing his vanity, he had gradually yielded to their persuasions, till he became so entangled in his own follies that it was much easier to continue his fault than recede into the troublesome path of repentance and apology; but though, when absent from Olivia, he readily admitted the weight of arguments, he had not exertion to resist, his heart was in reality too deeply impressed with her excellencies easily to relinquish his intention of securing them his own. Her superiority was sufficiently evident to his senses without the aid of reason; and when, in pursuance of the advice of his new friends, he urged her to a confidence, which she repeatedly assured him she had insurmountable obligations to refuse, he always believed she was right, though why he believed

so was beyond his power to explain. His civilities to Belnard were given in ceremony, and returned in carelessness; nor was the least trace of friendship or affection once betrayed between them in the general intercourse in which only they now met.

Such was the suspension of hope and fear, when Doctor Estlake received a letter from a distant relation requesting his attendance at a trial to be held at the quarter sessions of Norwich, to substantiate some evidence necessary in an important cause. He hesitated not to comply; but Colonel Belnard's solicitations to accompany him, he not only rejected, but insisted that he should remain at the Lodge, and occupy the apartments which exclusively belonged to the master of it: declaring,



that on this condition only he could consent to leave his protégées. “Whatever may be the risque,” said he, “I will not, on any terms but these, leave them subject to the caprice of my sister, or the insolence and impertinence of her companions; I see what they are driving at, and I positively charge you with the protection of these defenceless cares of my affections.”

Belnard, the next morning, saw his old friend depart, accompanied by his faithful attendant, Maddox; and with a degree of melancholy pleasure obeyed his injunctions, by taking possession of the study and chamber inside. The interval, till dinner, he passed as usual, and then it was he saw the propriety of the Doctor's precaution. Lady Senegal, her sisters,

and Dimple, who might now be considered as part of the family, were much less guarded than heretofore; they and Sophia frequently whispered and tittered; and though they compelled Waltheim to share their merriment, he evidently suffered the most painful confusion. Olivia observed them with an air of suspicion, and Marcella with disgust; and Bernhard resolved to be less secluded and more watchful than ever.—

The confederacy seemed, indeed, this day to enjoy themselves without restraint, and their hilarity was derived from more sources than one. The Colonel's unexpected attentions, so exclusively given to Sophia on the evening of his arrival, had awakened the dormant hopes of her and her mother, that notwithstanding the Doctor's threats on a former occasion,

The young gentleman was yet accessible. Sophia wished to recal his wandering fancy, and if possible to fix it; but finding the effort unavailing, she panted to convince him that she could command other conquests, and not only admitted, but courted the devotion of Dimple. Till now the presence of her uncle had, in those intervals restrained the adulation of the lisping lover, who now openly adored the medium through which he obtained a participation of such excellent dinners; Lady Senegal and her sisters had the same motive and reward for supporting the delusion, and had very earnestly advised Mrs. Crank to encourage his addresses: she represented him as having great expectations, and as the *worthiest creature* existing, and her purpose entirely succeeded. The new admirer was never without an invitation,

and his friends were always included: but her Ladyship affected yet another politic stroke: she contrived to believe that Miss Cardinal would be an admirable auxiliary in this affair, and proposed sparing her for a few weeks to her friends at Estlake Lodge. Mrs. Crank, in accepting this proposition, forgot that her brother might not approve; but when reflection did occur, it was too late. Lady Senegal had this day brought Celestina, and surrendered her to the careful friendship of Mrs. Crank. Celestina was fat, fair, and almost forty; and her sister ~~was~~ rather in a more infantine age; but they were very good kind of women. They did not verify the satirical definition of their sex given by a certain poet:—

“Every thing by turns, and nothing long.”

For, in truth, they were nothing always; they had not an idea above a bugle necklace, a giggling chit chat in a corner, and adopting and aiding the plans formed by their wealthy, and of course, infallible leader; but, in themselves, and left to themselves, they were wholly harmless. Their satyr had no point to wound, or their praise no truth to flatter; in both they were directed by whim, without judgment; and it was equally safe to fall under the lash of their resentment, or pleasing to obtain the meed of their applause.

Olivia and Marcella, as usual, retired to their own apartment, when the ladies went to the drawing-room; and though they obeyed the summons to tea, they met no opposition to persevering in their custom

of withdrawing immediately after. Colonel Belnard, however, for the first time, mixed with this little assembly, and in his deputed character of master of the house easily contrived to conceal his real design: though much avoided by the two gentlemen, he found himself a welcome addition to the ladies coterie; and while he exerted his spirits to render his assiduities acceptable, he also exerted his penetration to developpe their thoughts, intentions, and designs.



## CHAP. X.

## AN EXPLANATION.

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BUT this state of painful uncertainty was not destined long to continue. The heart of Belnard fluctuated with the most intolerable throbbings, in the supposition that Waltheim, in proving unworthy of his prize, might lose it; and though bound in honor to avoid all steps that might forward his giddy friend's dismissal, he yet felt, that the most romantic folly alone could urge him to any measure that might prevent the extremity of a separation.

Such were the reflections of his mind the following day, as he traversed the study with slow and pensive footsteps, when the door was suddenly thrown open, and he beheld Marcella pale and in extreme agitation: she entered the room, and shutting the door with the quickness almost of frenzy, she caught his arm with a firm grasp.

"O, Mr. Belnard?" she exclaimed; "is not this cruel? too cruel!—your friend has betrayed us!"

The cause of her tumultuous emotion was now explained; Belnard at once saw that Waltheim's indiscretion was discovered, and kept silence where he could not excuse.



"Tis true;" she resumed; "he has betrayed the secret it was his duty to respect, and plunged the woman he professes to love into a repetition of those calamities from which she has so lately escaped."

Belnard attempted not to speak, but he led her to a seat, and threw open the glass door to admit the air. The violence of Marcella's resentment at length found relief in tears, and he felt the necessity of calling up every effort of honor and fortitude to guard himself against seizing the opportunity of influence, on his own account, which this moment presented.

"Would to God," resumed the sobbing Marcella, "that we had never seen

him! or that he had not rescued Olivia from a grave ten thousand times preferable to an existence led with him."

"How;" exclaimed Belnard; his face wholly colourless.

"Dear Colonel!" she impatiently returned, "if you knew Olivia; if you knew the heart and understanding she possesses, you would acknowledge, even in the partiality of friendship, that Mr. Waltheim is unworthy of her."

"Why then," he falteringly demanded;—"why did she——"

"Accept of him? Ah! yes;—but it was my mother who gave her to him; she only saw his perfections; she had no op-

portunity to discover his faults, or she never could have exacted a promise so fatal to the happiness of the child she loved——she gloried in!”

Belnard threw his arm over the back of his chair, and leant his face on it to conceal its agitations.

“Olivia’s reason is stronger than mine,” resumed Marcella; “and the last command of my mother was, that I should implicitly submit to her guidance; to oppose her determination is therefore out of my power, but she cannot deceive me into a belief, that a mind like her’s can stoop to an alliance so inadequate, without disgust; yet such is the steady integrity, and such the fortitude of her soul, that though candid, frank, open

as the meridian sun in every other instance, she continues in this a reserve, which I despair of conquering, though I too plainly perceive she deplores the rashness of a vow it is incumbent on her to fulfil."

"O, Marcella! you think she deplores it?"

"Alas, too surely!" she replied; "Olivia, so firm in misfortune, the support of my mother and myself in circumstances too shocking to think of; who braved death, without shrinking, in our defence! now spends her nights in tears, which she vainly endeavours to conceal from me."

"Such, indeed," resumed Marcella,

after a pause; "such is her self-command, that she certainly persuaded herself to love him. She continually reminded me of the courage he so nobly exerted for our preservation, and dwelt on the amiable dispositions of his heart, though she never mentioned the qualifications of his head; but surely, had you been in his place, you had risked your life as nobly! O, that you had!" she earnestly repeated; "that it was to you"——

Belnard started from his seat, but the sight of Olivia and Waltheim approaching, in earnest conversation, arrested his attention and recalled his efforts for composure.

On reaching the glass door she hesitated to enter, but perceiving the tears

of her sister, she seated herself calmly beside her, and smiled in her face: yet it was not a smile of cheerfulness, or even of tranquillity; it struck the heart of Marcella, who throwing her arms round her neck, passionately wept in her bosom. Waltheim stood as if to comprehend the cause of this scene, but his imagination quickly suggested that he had been made a subject of complaint, and his countenance instantly fired with rage: Belnard saw it, and fearing his precipitancy, even in the presence of Olivia, resolved himself to retire.

“You must not go, Colonel;” said she; “as the friend of Mr. Waltheim, I request a few moments of your time.”

“Friend?” contemptuously repeated

Waltheim; his face pale, and his lips quivering; “but he may stay; I shall be glad to convince him I am no longer a child, and that I have slipped my leading strings.”

The Colonel attempted not a reply; and on Olivia repeating—“I request you to stay!”—he again sat down, and resumed his attitude, which now appeared that of attention.

She for a moment struggled for composure, but her native dignity quickly triumphed, and with a smile of ineffable sweetness, and a blush of confusion, she said:—

“I believe, Mr. Waltheim, you will do me the justice to acknowlege, that I have

ever treated you with the distinction due to the man who already has my promise of, one day, receiving my vows of obedience?"

The livid paleness of Waltheim's face was now succeeded by a deep crimson, and Olivia proceeded:—

"As I consider myself bound to you, you may be assured, that the communication of your misconduct was not made even to Colonel Belnard by my authority——"

"No;" interrupted Marcella, in a tone of violent resentment; "I did not,—I could not wait for my sister's permission to complain of the outrage you have committed!"



"Spare your reproaches, Madam!" cried Waltheim, sullenly; "your sister's will be sufficient!"

"You mistake," said Olivia; "I do not mean to reproach you, as you cannot know the extent of the injury your thoughtlessness has inflicted."

"And is not that a reproach?" muttered Waltheim.

"Perhaps," she coolly returned, "you expect me to approve?"

Waltheim offered no reply, but he endeavoured to conceal the feelings of shame; and suggestions of reason, by increasing the sullenness on his brows.

“ Permit me,” resumed Olivia, “ now that I have obtained your serious attention, and may I not add, acquired by your indiscretion, a right to vindicate my character from the odium of caprice? —permit me to explain, in the presence of your friend, the sentiments which have operated on my conduct? we have lately quarrelled and made up again, with a facility which must impress those who witnessed it with a very unfavourable opinion of my temper and intellects.”—

“ Do you mean, Madam, to assert that the fault was only mine?”

“ I mean, Sir,” she replied, “ to assert myself!”

Waltheim, astonished and abashed, felt that he dare not answer.

“There is no human being, however insignificant,” resumed Miss Vere, “whose good opinion I despise; and my anxiety to conciliate the esteem of those with whom I shall probably all my life associate, is proportionate to their own individual merits; and why should I not add? in proportion as their friendship is important to you. Had my present appeal been dictated by rancour, or a little mind, I should have made it to Doctor Estlake, who I have reason to believe is prejudiced against you, and not in the presence of the man to whose steady regard you confess obligations so infinite. From him I cannot expect the partiality you have so largely experienced; it is from his judgment alone I demand an acquittal!”

A vehement reply was on the lips of

Waltham, but she requested not to be interrupted, and again resumed.

“I have never deceived you, or could I do so; for though the unhappy events of my life have taught me to conquer feelings naturally acute, and though I have learned to suppress, or perhaps wholly subdue emotions of affection and gratitude, I never yet could wear the semblance of a regard my conscience did not acknowledge. When my mother gave you my hand, she explained my sentiments, and told you that the possession of my heart must depend only on yourself; and she told you truly. Early disappointments, and an opportunity for observation, may damp the ardour of hope, and that warmth of romantic expectation to which I was naturally but

too much inclined; but I had been impressed with the necessity of submitting to the guidance of reason and religion, and the school of adversity matured the lessons I received in the lap of indulgence and tenderness. My mother's acquaintance, with the mind she formed, enabled her to give you that promise which I have already fulfilled; and the very day before your friend's arrival I avowedly gave you possession of my heart."

Belnard called up all his strength to steady the perturbations of his frame.

"Suffer me to proceed?" she continued, preventing the words which Waltheim was about to utter: "it is the last time that any other person than yourself shall hear a sentence from my lips to your

disadvantage: let me simply trace your conduct from that day? I will then explain to you my reasons for making your friend a party concerned."

"You are cursedly cool, Madam," cried Waltheim, unwilling to believe himself wrong, "if you loved me as you said you did——"

"And as I truly did;" interrupted Olivia: "but I do not deceive you; you have forfeited my esteem, and I love you no longer."

"Damnation!" exclaimed Waltheim, in the mortified agony of rage and disappointment; "is it thus you give me up."

“ You are impetuous,” she replied; “ but I will still be sincere : the gift my mother presented you I will not withdraw, or the promise she devoted I will not falsify : here is my hand, and to yourself belongs the recovery of my affections.”

Wholly subdued by her gentleness and elegance, Waltheim, in the eagerness of rapture, seized her hand, and while he pressed it to his lips, felt all the shame of his errors, though he did not clearly comprehend what those errors were. Marcella glanced at him and her sister a look of reproach for a reconciliation she so little desired, and involuntarily moved towards the astonished and agitated Bernard.

“ That I will be your’s,” resumed

Olivia, "I again repeat; that I will be your's willingly is only in your own power; and I frankly declare to you, that a perseverance of the conduct you have lately adopted, must entirely alienate my heart. It is painful to me to wound your feelings when I already see your compunction, but I must make conditions with which I hope you will comply. Our first quarrel arose from my refusal to be your's before the expiration of my mourning, and the propriety of this refusal must be apparent without assigning any reason; but I confess to you I had a design in this delay: I owe to my future happiness this trial of your steadiness, and until the probation is expired, I will not be induced to forego my own right of acting as I please."



"Dearest Olivia!" cried Walthem;  
 "do you doubt my constancy?"

"I do; because you have submitted all your inclinations to persons unworthy your esteem, and have given confidence to those who do not deserve to be known to you. From the first moment I saw Lady Senegal I suspected that she was informed of my unhappy situation: in the piercing cunning of her black eyes I beheld a scrutiny of curiosity, which Mrs. and Miss Crank mistook for penetration; and in the forced suavity of her manners it was easy to discover the disappointment of her present gratifications, and the intended perseverance of a favourite pursuit. Her professions to me were beyond the limits of politeness, and her fondness for Miss Crank an effort almost

too great for even her powers of deception: but it opened to my view the bent of her character, and inspired me with caution to avoid her society,—though, alas! too late: I this day discovered how well she is already informed of that which I had powerful reasons for concealing from all the world, and through the publication of which we may yet incur heavy and fearful misfortunes.

“God of Heaven!” exclaimed the repentant Waltham; “how shall I repair my fault?”

“By returning to yourself, and to the long tried friend through whose advice you can merit your own approbation and my esteem.”

“That friend insulted me!” indignantly returned Walthem; “treated me like an idiot, who has no sense of feeling or resenting an injury.”

Belnard looked steadily at his accuser, but his face was ghastly pale; and Walthem, confirmed in his opinion, fiercely rejoined; “yes, Sir! I am informed of your well known honourable intentions on a former occasion; but Miss Arnault discovered she was the dupe of *your* artifices, not of mine!——”

The Colonel instantly resumed his composure. “To reply to your invectives,” said he, “in presence of ladies, would but degrade myself; and since I am no longer to exercise an influence, I will not hint at how much your rashness degrades

you; but you will one day learn how justly you have relinquished my admonitions for the interested suggestions of more selfish friends. For the sake of—your father, I wish you happy! but—for my own sake, I can make no efforts to ensure you so.”

Unable longer to command himself he left the room, and sought the seclusion of his favourite retreat in the garden, where he found leisure and opportunity for uninterrupted contemplations.

They, alas! confirmed all his fears. Olivia did not love Waltheim, but she deemed herself not the less his destined wife, and such was the disposition of this most inconsistent of all human beings, that Belnard well knew, the more contra-

dictions he found in the object of his wishes, the more earnestly he would pursue the attainment of it.

The tumultuous sensations, occasioned by a rapid succession of hopes, fears, and possibilities, had not time to subside before a summons to dinner called on him to exert his spirits for composure. He repaired to the parlour, where he found no addition to the usual family party; and even Miss Cardinal had gone home with her sisters, in order to prepare a dress to appear at a large party which Mrs. Crank expected to meet at the Lodge the next evening.

Belnard felt in this a relief, and endeavoured, by devoting his attentions to the ceremonies of the table, to elude the ob-

servation of Mrs. Crank and Sophia ; but he found this a most painful exertion. Olivia and Waltheim had entirely made up their difference of the morning, and the sound of her voice plainly denoted that he had obtained her entire forgiveness.

In vain might Belnard have hoped to conceal the effect of this confirmation against all possibility of his happiness, had not another circumstance engaged the faculties of Mrs. Crank and her daughter. Till this moment the character of Marcella had never unfolded itself to their perception, and they beheld, with unfeigned astonishment, the haughty demeanour of her carriage, and supercilious distance of her unbending manners. To them she behaved with a

degree of politeness, so strongly marked by condescension, that they appeared as a species of inferior order, and whom a sense of what she owed to her own consequence obliged her to treat with decorum: Waltheim was excluded from even this share of favour, and when her eye accidentally glanced on his face, she involuntarily drew back in an attitude of the most ineffable contempt. His conscious confusion gave her no triumph, for she considered him undeserving her resentment, and rather surveyed him as a worm she could crush, had she deemed him worth the trouble of an exertion: To Belnard she, on the contrary, addressed herself with every appearance of regard, and even of affection; her voice in speaking to him had a different modulation; she smiled at him with vivacity

and in every instance aimed at evincing the difference of the sentiments she entertained for him; but when she turned to Olivia! when she looked at her in silence, or answered her even in a monosyllable, her countenance assumed a new expression, her eyes melted in liquid tenderness, and her whole soul appeared dissolved in the softest sensations of pity and affection. Her tongue uttered no speeches of flattery, or professions of attachment; but in every act, in every look, in every tone, was written in the most emphatical characters — “My sister! I can die to make you happy!”

Mrs. Crank and Sophia, who, till now, had reflected but little on the nature of their offence, became apprehensive of they knew not what; and the ideas



excited by an alteration so extraordinary were extremely unpleasant. Marcella Vere, hitherto so silent, who spoke and looked only as directed by the voice or eyes of her sister, could she really be the same, in whose presence they now sat as culprits before a judge, as vassals beneath the feet of their monarch? Such, indeed, was the impression of wonder she created, that they had been almost tempted to doubt the evidence of what they saw and what they heard, had not a secret conscience whispered to them that they had presumed to speak of persons with familiarity and implication, who ought to have been treated as sacred and all powerful.

Eager to escape a restraint so inexplicable, Sophia reminded her mother and

Waltham of their evening engagement. Mrs. Crank gladly availed herself of the opportunity, offering some incoherent excuse for leaving her guests; but Waltham declared his resolution of remaining with Olivia, and she evinced her gratitude by the most pointed and conciliating attentions: she plainly endeavoured to reconcile him to himself, though with but little effect. Marcella neither spoke to him, or at him, but she swept her eyes across his visage with a strong expression of disapprobation and disgust, which soon rendered his situation so intolerable that he eagerly seized the hour of retiring, as affording him escape from the most painful captivity.

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## CHAP. XI.

## INTERESTING DISCOVERY.

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THE absence of Waltheim from Lady Senegal's left the female cabinet (not excluding Dimple) at full liberty to canvass the incidents of the morning, and the strange alteration of Marcella's manner on finding that the mysterious story was known. Very serious apprehensions were entertained by Mrs. Crank and Sophia of the Doctor's resentment; as he had already declared that these strangers were entitled, and should receive every mark of distinction, and they

feared to inform him that they knew to the contrary; but Lady Senegal, with the most unwearied pains, endeavoured to reconcile them to the fault they had committed.

“ Lord!” she fretfully ejaculated, “ why are you uneasy about such nonsense? if your brother is angry you ought to tell him your mind.”

“ And what is that?” simply demanded Sophia.

“ That Miss Vere endeavours to please him that she may get his fortune, and that her sister has set her cap at the Colonel.”

“ And doats on him,” added Celestina.

“Nonsense,” cried her Ladyship—  
 “do you think the man a fool?”——

“As to that,” said Mrs. Crank, “she may as well spare herself the trouble, he is not so easily caught, I can tell her.”

“’Pon my soul!” gently exclaimed Dimple, “that is precisely my idea of him.”

“What a charming fellow!” cried ~~her~~, “I hope he won’t be thrown away on her.”

“Nonsense,” exclaimed her Ladyship tartly, “I wonder you can utter such folly; he will not be so easily imposed on take my word for it. And if

these folk complain of you, Mrs. Crank, I'd have you boldly tell the Doctor what you think.——He is glad, to-be-sure,—to get Miss Vere off his hands, and Waltheim is just the cat's paw fit for that; but my life for it he'll be finely enraged if he hears there is a trap set for his young favourite the Colonel.”

The disputations on this head ran very high; Mrs. Crank was very willing to be persuaded that her brother could be led to any thing, though something told her he always took his own way; but she listened to the admonitions of her titled friend, and at a late hour had left her fulfraught with advice, and accompanied by the coadjutor Celestina.

But when in the morning they met the

objects of their premeditated vengeance, they found no opportunities to commence the hostilities intended; Olivia appeared as she had ever done, except that she spoke less, and with more reserve than usual; but Marcella had thrown off all restraint: she had resumed her very self, and was equally careless whether she excited their wonder, their hatred, or their applause. She addressed only her sister and the Colonel, and even them but seldom; but she still gave to them the distinction they had hitherto enjoyed; she seemed indeed to forget there were other persons present, and was as much at her ease as if she neither saw or heard the party who had been inflated with the fullest expectations of disconcerting and levelling against her the shafts of irony and mortification.

Marcella had, in fact, determined no longer to keep measures with persons she despised too much to feel offended with; but they still afforded her subject for amusement, and having obtained her sister's consent, she commenced her operations. Mrs. Crank was to be engaged the whole morning in giving orders for the evening entertainment; and Sophia and her fair friend were busy in the drawing-room affixing some new fantasies to their personal decorations. Marcella knew this, and by the time she thought them settled to their various occupations, she descended from her apartment.

The two companions were seated opposite each other in close divan, their heads almost touching, in the earnestness of communication, when the door was deli-



berately and widely thrown open, and Marcella entered with a majesty as awful and commanding as it was graceful and natural. Surprise, at a sight altogether unexpected, did not deprive them of the power of motion, though it prevented immediate recollection; they started up in hurry and dismay, and at a loss for refuge from their confusion, in the consciousness that they had been speaking of the very person present, they wheeled their chairs to a distance, and again sat down, expecting to be left as usual to themselves. They were however, mistaken: Marcella had brought in her netting-box, which she placed on the table, and seating herself with the utmost composure, quietly applied herself to her employment as if no living soul was in her sight.

Wholly disconcerted and wholly astonished, they exerted every effort to recover from their confusion, and started subjects various and unconnected; but Miss Cardinal was not easily intimidated; she rallied her importance, and tolerably succeeded in speaking with her accustomed volubility. At length she addressed Marcella, but the answers she received were very ill calculated to restore good humour, or enliven repartee; they were confined to one syllable, to which she always added, in the strongest pronunciation, the word, "*Madam*;" and though it was uttered with a countenance as grave and dignified as the noblest Spaniard could assume, it yet conveyed an idea of the burlesque, extremely ungrateful to the feelings of vanity and self-

conceit, with which the bosom of Miss Cardinal so largely expanded.

A situation, such as this, could not long be endured; but the entrance of some occasional visitors afforded hope of relief. The laugh, the chat went round, yet Marcella was still the same: her netting was pursued with the most profound but tranquil attention; and when a sentence was addressed to her, the answers she returned were precisely the same, and in a tone precisely as solemn. Her eye added no meaning to her words, she simply looked full in the face of the person who spoke, and having finished her reply, again returned to her occupation.

Manners so extraordinary could not

fail to draw the general gaze; but no alteration was observed, and they gradually experienced an impression of constraint from which they felt eager to escape, not without internal supposition that the young lady was very proud, very foolish, or perhaps both.

At dinner Marcella was still the same to the ladies; Waltheim she did not even see; but to Belnard and Olivia her manners were warm, elegantly graceful, and equally distant from self-presumption or officious affectation. She had established her sovereignty, and considered them as of the Blood Royal; all else she looked upon as untitled by either the privileges of nature, or local circumstance, to any mark of favour or attention.

To the expected party in the evening they could only now look forward for relief, and as the strangers had never yet on these occasions appeared, the confederacy were absolutely certain of a release; but again they were mistaken, for again Marcella's majesty entered to confound them. 'Twas true, her netting was given up, but her eyes had still the same tranquil appearance, equally abandoned by expression or vacancy. When any of those obnoxious to her, spoke to herself, or to any other person, she continued to look full at them, without appearing to hear what they said; neither did she seem to think of any thing very important. Lady Senegal was prepared for a most dignified display of wealth, rank, and fashion: she treated persons who were nobody, with the most amiable

familiarity, and expected to be considered by them as somebody. Miss Cardinal was in excellent spirits for the chatting parties, to which she always devoted herself in scenes like these. ~~She~~ had determined to be enchantingly simple, and Dimple looked to the general approbation of *all* the ladies; but, alas! this evening, so splendid, so brilliant, so delightful, gradually became clouded. Wealth no longer awed, beauty no longer charmed, and pleasantry ceased to please: wherever a knot assembled, Marcella was a looker on; wherever a card-table was made up, she was fixed near it; their wit excited no smile; their elegance no admiration; their winnings were beheld without joy, their losses proclaimed without exciting her to sorrow: Still, still, her eyes leisurely settled on the face of one,

then moved to the face of another; and in a very short time Mrs. Crank perceived that her guests were uncomfortable, they knew not why; and gaiety had fled, they knew not wherefore.

Belnard also had been surprised at the singularity of her behaviour? but an expression of drollery, concealed from all but him, opened his eyes to her purpose, and he endeavoured to employ his attention in observing its magical effects; his mind, however, panted for solitude, and a note which was brought to him, and which required an answer, afforded him an opportunity to leave the drawing-room. He dispatched his reply, and putting on his hat, passed through the glass door into the garden. The air, softly undulating through the leaves,

scarce breathed a whisper, and the moon had risen in full and resplendent beauty : all was calmness and tranquillity ; and as the reception rooms were confined to the front of the house, no voice interrupted the stillness which reigned around. Secure from observation he measured his steps towards his favourite retreat, and had reached the sequestered spot which terminated the walk, when a deep drawn sigh started him from his reverie. He listened ! all again was silent ; but possessed with a belief that he had heard a breath, he opened the leaves which cloathed the interwoven branches of the arbour, and distinguished somebody within. He moved round, and breaking his way through the shrubs, reached the walk leading to the entrance :—All was hushed ; and an idea starting, that some



person was concealed with an improper design, he stepped silently forward till he reached the spot: a heavy cloud in the instant passed over the moon, yet he plainly perceived an object, and cautiously entered. It was a female figure, her arms resting on the table, and one of them supporting her head: the heart of Belnard bounded to his throat; he approached still nearer, silent and breathless; the moon suddenly emerged from obscurity, and glared upon the object.— It was—Olivia.

Emotions the most powerful assailed him: he perceived that she slept profoundly, and the danger of the night air occurred to him, but he feared to startle her abruptly, and cautiously seating himself beside her, could not relinquish the

delight of contemplating features so dear to his heart. Her pale cheek, rendered yet paler by the contrast of her dark dress, rested on the back of her hand; and the silver light, passing through an opening in the trees, was shed full on her face. The dark lashes of her eyes glittered with a tear; and the heart of Belnard swelled with intolerable sensations! “she is unhappy,” said he; “and it is her virtue, her delicacy, that renders her so,—cruel—fatal integrity;—but were she less perfect, she would be less dear to me!——” He continued to gaze with unutterable affection on her face, but it suddenly lost its serenity; her breath became short and quick, and her countenance changed with alarming expression. Trembling and hesitating he ventured to touch the hand that was

disengaged; it was cold as marble, he grasped it firmly, and the motion awoke her.

"What! who is that?" said she.

"Your truest friend," he hastily replied, "whom accident brought to the spot. I fear I have alarmed you?"

"Ha!—Mr. Belnard!—you frightened me a little."

"Not intentionally, believe me," he falteringly returned.

"O, no; I am certain of that; I believe I was dreaming something terrible, for the impression still beats on my heart;—but why did *you* come here?"

“ May I not retort the question?” said he.

“ Yes; and it is easily answered.—I came here to—elude my own reflections.”

“ And I to indulge mine; but were your’s of a nature to fly from?”

“ Not absolutely; but—I conclude they were less agreeable than your’s, because—”

“ Because why?”

“ Because, you have no cause for uneasiness—you are—happy.”

“ Perhaps not quite,” he resumed, in

trembling hesitation; "but do I say too much in assuring you that your visible uneasiness is the sharpest thorn to my peace?"

"My uneasiness," exclaimed Olivia, in a tone of surprise; "I hope you are sincere in that profession, Colonel?"

"Sincere?—O, heaven!"

"Nay," said she "you must not be angry that I am pleased in finding my apprehensions were groundless."

"Apprehensions! Oh!—Madam—what apprehensions?"

"I feared, indeed, you had altogether given up your friend; but——"

"But what?---Madam,"

"As you still take an interest in his welfare half my anxieties are done away."

The strength of this short sentence astonished him, and for a moment he fancied that she intended a reproach; but her voice and manner assured him of the contrary, and he found that the expression he had unguardedly addressed to her, she mistook as applied to Waltheim's late conduct. The disappointment was severe, but the last words recalled his meditated wishes of obtaining her friendship, and an internal sense of rectitude embellished it in glowing colours.

"I am aware," resumed Olivia, "that you have much to complain of; yet human nature is liable to error, and I am persuaded you are capable of forgiving the faults you have never yourself committed: if I thought you would listen—with patience——"

"O, Miss Vere!" he exclaimed; struggling with the sensations of rapture her words unintentionally inspired;—"but—What would you say?"

"I would plead for your friend," she replied, with vivacity; and in a tone and attitude of entreaty—"you are silent?"—she added——

"But attentive!" he replied, in extreme emotion.

“ I will not attempt,” said she, “ entirely to vindicate him, but allow me at least to say that my unhappy and mysterious fate is at least a very important extenuation. His conduct to me is not a proof of his prudence, I admit, but it is a strong declaration of his attachment: he knows not who I am, who are my connections, from whence I came, or why I am come at all; yet he persists in wishing that we may be united, and has uniformly wished it since his first declaration of partiality.”

“ Why, Madam, do you particularize that circumstance ?”

“ To remind you, that though his temper is volatile and inconsistent he is yet capable of a continued regard for me,



with whom he may be said to be unacquainted; how much more established then must be his attachment to you, whose character is so well known to him?"

"Perhaps," cried Belnard, endeavouring to rally; "perhaps that is the reason he no longer values me?"

"O, no!" she earnestly replied; "believe me, you are unjust to him; he represented you as all that is great, noble, and generous; as a man of polished refinement, and firmest principles——"

"And do you, Madam, believe that——  
he was unjust——?"

"In his representation?—surely no——"

for, could he have said much more in your favour, I had implicitly believed him."

"O, Miss Vere!" cried the agitated Belnard, "you know not the strength of your expressions!"

"That is because they are sincere, and because I am most earnest,—most anxious to obtain for him a return of your regard."

For some moments both were silent: Olivia seemed to await his speaking, and he at last addressed her in a tone of solemnity that concealed the feelings which actuated him.

"If you, Miss Vere," said he, "could

know what has lately passed in my heart, you would discover the extent of the friendship I offered to Waltheim. Respect for myself, and obedience to the principles you just now allowed me to possess, would at all times urge me to act as a man of honor, but to no other man living would I have made the sacrifice I have made to him: his failings I by no means dwell on, and should he be united to you I will endeavour to forget them, and see only his good qualities, which, no doubt, your influence will confirm. He knows in part the claims he possesses to my good offices, but he cannot know the whole; to you, however, I will declare, that the tie which now binds him to me is more powerful than all the wide range of moral perfection united in his single person could secure to him; while

that tie holds I will be his friend, even were he degraded below the most savage society; and through that bond he may command my friendship, my fortune, and even my life."

"May it never, never be weakened!" warmly exclaimed Olivia; "this assurance is doubly grateful to my heart, because it raises him much, very much in my opinion."

"Why; why do you say so?" Belnard quickly demanded.

"Simply because I believe that friendship cannot exist without some similarity of sentiment; I may therefore flatter myself, that since your's for Mr. Waltheim is so determined, you have disco-

vered something in his character congenial to your own."

This was too much ! the caution, the prudence, the resolution of Belnard, instantly fled before the rapid succession of hopes her words inspired : he intently gazed at her in the astonishment of his soul, and clasping his hands in the energy of rapture, he wildly exclaimed, " O God !—can I—may I believe this ?"

Olivia was surprised !—she looked at him for an explanation, but he was incapable of giving it : sparks of fire shot across his sight,—his head sunk powerless on his hand, and a sigh burst from the bottom of his bosom.

Distressed, —terrified even beyond her

own comprehension, she eagerly enquired if he was ill? The light shone on her features, but his were in the shade;—she saw not therefore that his eyes were fixed on her face, which betrayed an expression of which she was wholly unconscious, and excited tumults so various and impetuous, that even an effort to speak was impossible; and Olivia, persuaded that his silence was occasioned by sudden indisposition, caught the hand next her with an emotion that sufficiently indicated the real state of her feelings.

“What!— what is the matter?” said she;—“speak to me, I beseech you—!”

Still he spoke not; but the hand she had given him he snatched to his lips, pressed to his heart, again kissed it, and

overcome by the agonies of delight, tears burst from his eyes and fell on her arm.

Olivia, in her turn, became speechless; —surprised; —confused; —comprehending something, but nothing clearly, she attempted not to withdraw the hand he still pressed to his trembling lips; but a double conviction flashed on her mind; she at once saw that she was betrayed to him and to ——— herself; and his emotions declared more than language could explain. For a moment she was deprived of recollection, but a croud of ideas again rushed upon her memory, and hastily releasing her hand, she arose to depart.

He now caught both hands; “Olivia,”

said he, "pardon me;—my offence was involuntary, but—it cannot now be recalled!"

"O, Mr. Belnard!" she expressively replied; "you are lowered in my esteem, and what is yet more dreadful, you have lessened me in my own eyes."

"No," said he; "we are not to blame: the spirit of truth and purity that in this silent hour breathes around us, whispers, that a *similarity of sentiment* must not be divided.—Olivia!—my fate is fixed;—I cannot now give you up."

Emotions, painful and complicated, agitated her, while he spoke; but her deviation from herself was but momentary, and Belnard now beheld her exactly as



she had once before appeared in the chamber of her mother.

"Recollect yourself, Sir!" said she,

He instantly let go her hands; she walked out of the arbour, and slowly took the path leading to the house, which she entered before he entirely recovered the use of his reason.

To arrange his ideas was still however impossible. Fear and hope alternately took possession of him; and wrung his heart with anguish; or dilated it with rapture. He saw that he was beloved, but he also saw he had offended;—still, still, the prospect that had opened to his delighted imagination did not close, though it receded from his view; and through

the heavy mist that lowered on his present happiness he traced an elysium of solid and permanent joys. Yet—circumstances must intervene, and unlooked-for events take place, before the delicacy of Olivia's mind could permit her to listen to his addresses ; and when he found calmness enough to dwell upon what these circumstances and events must be, he sunk into despondency, and experienced a fainting sickness of heart almost intolerable.

At length the sound of a distant clock striking twelve reminded him of his situation and long absence from the company. He hastily returned to the study, and finding the light still burned on the table where he had left it, he felt a momentary satisfaction in this certainty, that he had

not been enquired for: he immediately went to the drawing-room, where the card-tables had just broken up, and the party were about to descend to supper.

“Here comes Miss Marcella’s favourite,” said Lady Senegal, sarcastically.

“I am glad of it,” replied Marcella, “for I was weary of being alone—” she nodded to him invitingly, and he instantly joined her.

“I am sorry, Ma’am,” said Dimple, affecting to be witty, “we shall not have the pleasure of your company to supper.”

“The pleasure, Sir,” she replied, “was not intended for you.”

"It is only for the Colonel," cried Lady Senegal, forcing a laugh of malice.

"That is all," answered Marcella, carelessly——

Bernard was both amused and flattered by this distinction in his favour; he saw the motive, and failed not to second it by the most pointed attentions. She sat beside him at supper, and talked to him with the utmost freedom and good humour, though she could not help observing every eye turned on her, and the frequent whispers which were plainly levelled against her: she still continued wholly at ease, and equally pleased with her companion and herself. Lady Senegal, whose imagination was ever working on some project, could ill brook the

remarks she heard around her; her disappointment quickly swelled into downright anger against those who suggested surmises so ungrateful to her, and though the glowing animation and softened interest of the Colonel's features explained sentiments she was determined not to understand, she sharply reprimanded those who permitted themselves to trust the evidence of their senses.

## CHAP. XII.

## FORTUNE TELLING.

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THE perturbation of Colonel Belnard, had but little interruption from sleep, and the hour in which he was again to meet Olivia, was wished for in all the vicissitudes of hope and fear.

At length it arrived; Olivia entered the break fast-room, her air serene and perfectly unembarrassed. Belnard felt his colour vary, and made a vigorous effort to command his presence of mind; trembling and timid he presented a chair

and wished to speak, but the words died away unuttered; the suspension was insupportable; he fixed his eyes on her face to penetrate if possible her feelings, and in raising her's to thank him, she met his gaze; a faint blush tinted her cheek; she curtsied in confusion, but immediately recovered herself, and spoke to him with a dignity and freedom, so equally blended that his incertitude in the revival of hope, and the terrors of disappointment, became more painful than ever.

Soon, however, he perceived that while the attentions of Waltheim were accepted with pleasure, his own met only politeness: no symptoms of confusion were again betrayed, and though he still endeavoured to flatter himself in his delusive expectations, the vivacity of her

manner convinced him she was too much at ease for emotions such as then tortured his bosom.

The morning left him opportunity for reflection, and it came in dreadful force. He asked himself, could he have been deceived in her expressions of the evening before? He recollected each sentence, and the manner in which it was uttered, and again became satisfied that he was not indifferent to her. In the instant, an idea started, that on discovering a partiality till then unknown, she had, perhaps, adopted a resolution to dismiss Waltheim, and in this decision had regained her long lost tranquillity. To this he might reasonably attribute the ease of her manner, and the serenity of her countenance, and he resolved to believe it possible, that he might yet possess her.



Hurried on by the tide of enthusiasm, he could, with difficulty, command his patience till he again should see her. At dinner they met, and she still appeared the same; but he did not relinquish hope, and panted for certainty.

Immediately after the cloth was removed, Sophia desired Miss Cardinal to produce the fan which she had that morning purchased, and try whether Miss Vere's fortune would answer to Mr. Waltheim's: I declare, she seriously added, I never saw any thing so true as his was; even her name is mentioned.

Miss Cardinal readily obeyed; her stock of riddles and charades had lately been quite exhausted, and she was happy in this new resource for conversation.

"Is your prophecy infallible?" demanded the Colonel.

"It is, at least, very extraordinary," said Waltheim.

"Do, read his fortune," cried Sophia; "though I'm sure there's nothing in such things, but they are so funny——"

"I will read his, and your's too;" answered Miss Cardinal, "here they are; this is your's."

"Your head and heart devoid of thought,]

"Will soon be in adventure caught;

"Your hand in haste will soon be sought

"And conquest crown, a battle fought.

"The two last lines are well enough," said Mrs. Crank, "but it's all a humbug."

"This is Waltheim's," resumed Miss Cardinal.

"If the girl you ask is kind;

"If you meet her in the mind;

"Take her while she is inclin'd;

"For she's *Vereing* as the wind.

"Is not that pretty plain, Colonel?" demanded Miss Cardinal.

He stooped to adjust the collar of the dog, and answered, "yes."

"Now Miss Vere, or Miss Vereing, or whatever your name is," cried Sophia, "let us see what is promised for you."

"As you think my fate is already decided," said she smiling, "all farther enquiry is unnecessary."

"O, but you know it is all a joke," cried Walthem; "you must try, Olivia."

"As you please," she replied, and obeyed the instructions of Miss Cardinal, by pointing to a compartment in the fan. The mystic lines ran thus:

"Uncertain doubts hang o'er your head,

"And hopes fond dream you think is fled;

"But Fate's decree is not yet sped,

"And therefore cannot yet be read.

Belhard involuntarily raised his eyes, to observe the effect produced by these lines: the deep blush which suffused the features of Olivia, was chased by a paleness, similar to that which had taken possession of his own.

"Olivia does not like that prophecy," said Walthem.

"It's nothing like your's, indeed;" returned Sophia, "but I'm sure there is no truth in either."

"Pooh!" rejoined her mother; "don't we all know that?— but now for the Colonel's, and Miss Marcella's."

"The lady first," said Miss Cardinal.

"The gentleman first," returned Marcella—

"Come then Colonel." He obeyed, and Miss Cardinal read;—

"Whether bliss; or whether woe—

"Is all you now request to know;

"Then hope, the first! secure though slow,

"Your tide of happiness shall flow.

“ That is a fair promise,” said he, endeavouring to rally his retreating spirits— “ I hope your’s may be equally flattering, Miss Marcella.

“ And equally true,” she replied in the most serious tone.

“ What !” cried Sophia ; “ do you believe in such things ?”

“ Implicitly,” she returned.

Every eye stared at her in surprise ; but she looked as she had spoken.

“ Well then, let us see what your’s predicts,” cried Miss Cardinal—Marcella yielded, and she read——

“ Your question is a mere pretence,  
“ But truth should never give offence;  
“ In Hymen’s chains then take defence,  
“ The man you love is not far hence.

“ Gracious me,” cried Sophia, too much astonished to observe the deep crimson that mantled on the cheek of Marcella.

“ I believe there must be something in it! but it don’t exactly agree with the Colonel’s neither.”

“ Why should it do so?” demanded Marcella.

“ Because—because—” and she hesitated a reply.

“ O don’t hurry yourself,” returned Marcella; “ I by no means expect a reasonable answer.”

Sophia did not clearly understand this sentence, but it struck her as being contemptuous, and Mrs. Crank glancing a look of rage at the person who uttered it, rose from the table, and the party separated as usual.

Belnard remained in the study a considerable time, and then went up to the drawing-room: it was empty, and he learned from the servant who soon after brought up the tea equipage, that Mrs. Crank had left an apology for him, as she was obliged to go out. The man added, that he would call the young ladies.

Footsteps soon after approached, and the heart of Belnard beat quick:---Olivia entered and---alone.



She started in surprise, and asked where were the ladies?

“ —Engaged ; I am told,” he falteringly replied.

“ And my sister?---I thought she was with you.”

“ No,——Madam---I have not seen her since.”

“ She is in the garden then,” said Olivia, ringing the bell for the servant, who on appearing she sent to summons her.

“ I am sorry,” said Belnard, endeavouring to speak with composure, “ that I did not know she would permit me the

honor of her company. I certainly could not have denied myself the gratification it affords."

"You are such a favourite with her," replied Olivia, that when she is not with me, I naturally conclude she is with you."

The entrance of the person alluded to prevented Belnard's comment on what Olivia had said, but he could not avoid observing that her manner was still careless and easy, and deduced from it the most painful conclusion.

Marcella's questions to them and also to the servant, now produced an explanation, that Mrs. Crank had gone out without leaving any apology except for

the Colonel ; and that Mr. Waltham wanted to stay at home, but she would not let him, or permit Sophia to carry up a message he wished to leave."

"I am not surprized ;" said Olivia, as the servant shut the door ; "when you treat them with so little ceremony, you cannot be angry that they retort."

"Nor am I," said Marcella ; "I would not have missed the good folk, only that Colonel Belnard looked so vexed."

"What a strange girl you are ;" cried Olivia : "you certainly do not intend to offend these people ?"

"No."

“Or to please them?” rejoined the Colonel.

“No.”

“Dear Marcella,” cried Olivia, “believe me they do not understand your manners.”——

“Would you have me explain them?” asked Marcella.

Her sister laughingly replied, “she feared that would be worse.”

“Then how are they to understand either you or me?”

“I always intend that my meaning shall be obvious,” answered Olivia.

Beluard hastily raised his eyes to her face; she betrayed no embarrassment, and he felt mortified and offended at the tone in which these words were pronounced.

"And was not my meaning pretty obvious?" asked Marcella.

"I own it was," said Olivia, laughing.

"You know," resumed Marcella, "that I was a long time amazingly civil; and even now I do not laugh at these people, I only despise them."

"Good heaven!" exclaimed Olivia: "how can you utter such a speech?"

"Simply because I think it. I do not

hesitate to be sincere before Colonel Belnard—he is one of *us* you know.”

The Colonel, endeavouring to rally, bowed to her compliment with an air of gallantry.

“Only that I know you so well,” resumed Olivia, “I should be tempted to think you very ill-natured, but as it is, I cannot acquit you of injustice.”

“In what instance?”

“Almost every instance. These *people*, as you call them are far from unamiable; Sophia particularly, though her manners do not please you.”

“Nor you either.”

"I admit that I would not make her my model in either thinking or acting, but we are indebted to her and her mother for kindness, and hospitality, and even for society."

"Society, Olivia!"

"Yes; there are none more independent of external resources than you, Marcella; and yet ennui would sometimes overtake you without the relief of some social intercourse."

"Then you like the relief their social intercourse affords?"

"I acknowledge I do. Had our situation admitted of choice, perhaps mine had not been fixed as it is, but the friend-

ships I form by necessity. I will not abandon through caprice."

Belnard understood the full meaning of these expressions, and starting from his chair walked to the window.

"I must admire your sentiments," cried Marcella; "but I have not like you learned to suppress my natural inclinations, and reason myself into unnatural ones."

"But when necessity compels us to any mode of conduct, what is the use of reason, if we do not command our natural inclinations."

"True; you are always in the right:—



but dear Olivia! do you not refine away your own happiness?"

"I hope not---and I believe not, for if I acted on any other principle I must be miserable. I know," she continued, "that we women are accused of that weakness, but I really think with injustice. We are not indeed (like men,) early accustomed to view self-indulgence as a matter of course; we therefore shrink from the first advances of error, and being from infancy inured to subjection, are more easily empowered to subdue ourselves. We turn with horror, from the intrusion of even the most distant thought incompatible with strict rectitude,——should such present itself in the most illusive shape, it yet leaves a sting to memory, which time may blunt but ought never

to destroy,---but surely Marcella, you cannot say this is trifling away happiness! though to those sentiments do we owe some of our most uneasy moments."

"Dear, dear Olivia!" cried her affectionate sister, throwing herself on her neck; "how deeply have you studied this subject!"

"And for your benefit I hope?" she smilingly replied.

"Why---a---yes:---but still Olivia, I wish you were not quite so reasonable;---so very good and exalted!"——

"So, so;---if you can be severe, I also

find you can flatter,—but why do you wish that?”

“Because if you were less perfect, you would be more happy.”

“Alas, alas,”---cried Olivia; “have I then been preaching to the winds?---but as you are not to be converted, and I am not to be shaken, I will at least avoid dispute.”

She arose to go, and Marcella beseechingly prevented her.

“Dearest, dearest Olivia,” she exclaimed; “I will be converted;---I will implicitly follow your councils,---when occasion calls.”——

“ May it never call !” cried Olivia, as she moved to the door; she there turned half round, kissed her hand to her sister, and hastily left the room.

Belnard had for some moments gazed on her with piercing enquiry ; he saw in the touching expression of her features, and distinguished in her last accents, a meaning that wrung his heart almost to madness!—his eyes still dwelt on the door that shut her from his view, and at once losing all powers of recollection, he wildly clasped his hands, and exclaimed, “ O, Olivia !—is this my sentence ?”

He staggered towards a sofa, on which he sunk ; and Marcella, alarmed at an appearance so extraordinary, demanded the cause? but his agitation pre-

vented a reply ; she seated herself beside him, and taking his hand again, repeated her question.

“ O, Marcella ! ” he exclaimed ; “ you know not what I at this moment endure ; — I love your sister more than existence ! — my very soul is linked to her’s ! — I have long — long sought for the image of my glowing imagination, and found her already destined for another.”

The earnest attention of Marcella, while he spoke, absorbed all powers of interruption ; but when his meaning was thus unequivocally developed, she raised her eyes to heaven, and energetically exclaimed, — “ thank God ! — thank God ! — she may yet be happy ! ”

Belnard started in amazement!——  
“ Marcella !”——he cried,——“ what have you said ?”

“ What I have long hoped---long wished. It has long been the most fervent wish of my heart to see Olivia your wife.”

A declaration so unlooked for, instantly awakened every dormant hope in the bursting bosom of Belnard ; a thousand impossibilities suddenly vanished : transport again resumed its dominion, and it was long before he could give utterance to his emotions.

“ My wife ?” he repeated ; “ O, Marcella ;---what tumults does that word excite!---may it indeed be possible ?--

"I hope---most fervently I hope so," she replied; "and to confess to you a truth, I do believe that Olivia herself-----"

"What?---dear Marcella, speak."-----

"Will not break her heart if fate decrees that it shall be so? nay," she continued, "you must not forget that obstacles still intervene."-----

"None," he cried, "that I will not conquer."-----

"Beware;" interrupted Marcella,---  
"I caution you to let events take their own course, and avoid any step, the knowledge of which will lower you in Olivia's esteem. Her ideas, as a female, are pecu-

liarly nice ; and though she readily forgives, she is easily disgusted."

"Dearest Marcella !" cried Belnard ;  
"guide me ; lead me---I am not unworthy  
her esteem---instruct me how I may obtain  
her heart."

"By pursuing the conduct she herself  
has followed. It is this only that can be  
your advocate in her favour, for she has  
enjoined me to a silence that I dare not  
break---but even from this I draw a good  
omen."——

"Enchanting prophetess!---what would  
you predict?"

"I believe that she has been compelled  
to this caution by having inadvertently



made comparisons which must have produced a very decided effect in your favour, and a secret conscience has alarmed her delicacy with fears for her heart. To this I attribute the silence she has enjoined me to, and which I am certain she has imposed on herself. She never mentions your name, or adverts to any circumstance in which you bear a part---yet such is the firmness of her integrity, that be the performance of duty ever so painful, she will not shrink from it, and the feelings and affections it dictates will really become established in her inclinations."

"Alas!--I have then nothing--nothing to hope."

"I believe the contrary," said Mar-

cella, smiling---“ though I confess, not from Olivia.”

“ Not from Olivia!---who then has power to——”

“ Waltheim,” she interrupted ;---“ it is from Waltheim himself I expect her release ; the man only fancies himself in love, and when he finds out his mistake he will give her up.”

“ Impossible!---impossible, Marcella!---to possess Olivia’s promise, and surrender it?---it is a chimerical hope.”——

“ I yet think not,” she replied ; “ and ---dear Colonel---I yet expect to salute you by the title of brother.”——

“ My sister,” he cried, catching her to his breast ;---“ my beloved sister ;---dear Marcella---preserve to me this delusion---I dare not relinquish it.”——

“ Except for the reality,” she smilingly replied.

A loud knocking at the house-door started them from this interesting subject, and Marcella hastily said ;---“ you are pale---you are agitated---go and hide yourself till you recover.”

“ Dear Marcella ;---my dear, dear sister, ---I obey.”

“ You are in the right, my brother,” she replied ; “ for *when occasion calls*, I

will not disgrace the example of Olivia:-- go, go, you look quite crazy."

Belnard escaped at one door as Mrs. Crank entered at another, and Marcella moved leisurely to her own apartment.

END OF VOL. I.

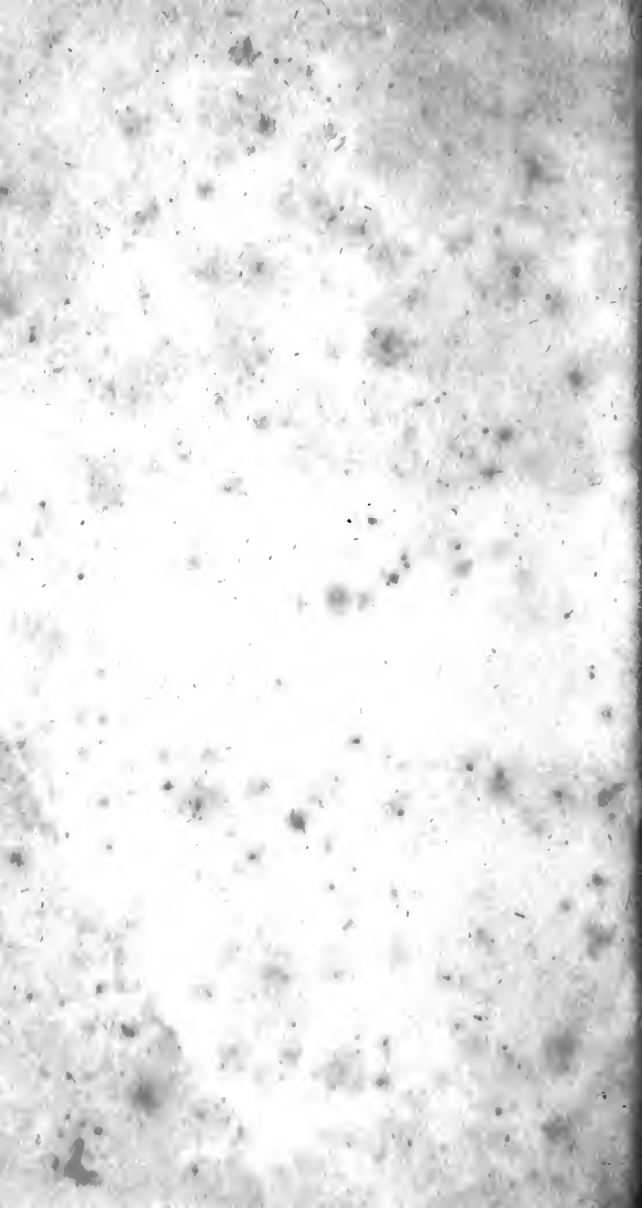
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